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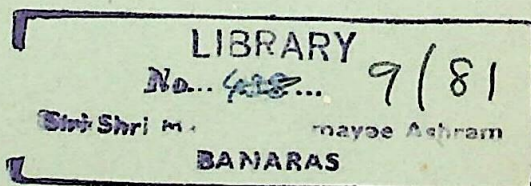
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RAMDAS SPEAKS

VOLUME VII



AMERICA

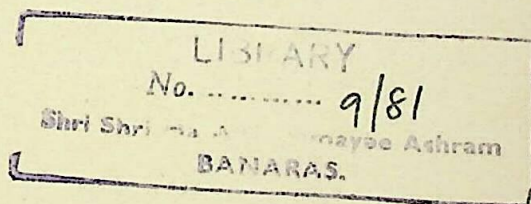


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RAMDAS SPEAKS

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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, U. S. A.

19th October, 1954

Speech at the Rotary Club

HAPPINESS LIES IN DECENTRALISING OURSELVES

Dear Friends,—Ramdas, as the name signifies, is a servant of God—'Ram' means God and 'das' means servant. As such he is standing before you to speak to you about God. Unless we have faith and unless we know how to commune with Him, we cannot practise love and service. As we go on praying to Him, and inwardly commune with Him, we develop love for all human beings. This rare human life is granted to us by God in order that we may use all the powers which He has given us for the uplift, for the good and welfare, of humanity. This can be possible only when we attune our inner life with Him as the universal Spirit, and do all actions as a dedication to Him—in a spirit of complete surrender to Him. It is then that we become the most useful instruments in His hands. By the service rendered to humanity selflessly, we achieve true happiness and peace in this life.

Our object in life is to attain happiness. We know that by acquiring any amount of wealth, by holding any high position, we cannot get this happiness. Our happiness lies in decentralising ourselves, by getting rid of the egoistic sense which keeps us separate from the universal Spirit—God. This can be done only by communing with Him, by whatever name you may call Him. He is dwelling in the hearts of every one of us, but we are not conscious of Him. This unconsciousness of Him is responsible for our feeling of separation from Him, and so long as it lasts, we can never know what true happiness and peace is. Therefore we are asked to commune with Him, to pray to Him, so that we can merge our little individuality in His cosmic personality. When we do this, we come by true happiness and peace.

The ego or individuality is crystallised selfishness. The purpose of our communion with God is to break down this ego, to melt it down so that ultimately it may disappear in Him, and we can realise we are not merely individuals but the expressions of the universal Spirit. This is the message which is handed down

to us by saints and sages and great incarnations belonging to different religions in the world. Our object, therefore, in life is to release the soul which is bound, so that it may soar into the heavenly expanse of the divine Spirit. Then only we can live the true life and practise divine love and service.

YOU MUST BE MORE THAN FRIENDS

Ramdas has heard much of the Rotary Club while in India. It has been doing, he is told, great service to humanity. This organisation is international in character. Its membership is drawn from all countries and from all professions, creeds, classes, races and nations. It is a cosmopolitan body which aims at the fulfilment of the great ideals of mutual friendship and selfless service. This is its motto. All of you members must be consciously, willingly and cheerfully serving the great cause for which this world-wide popular organisation stands. On the human plane, we can no doubt serve our fellow-beings. But if we enter deep within us and become aware of the spiritual kinship by which we are all bound together, and in which all distinctions are lost, then alone we shall be able to establish a truly universal brotherhood which will dispel all clouds of discord, strife and war, that are hanging over us.

You are all assembled here with the object of loving one another as friends. But you must be more than friends. You must know that you are linked together not merely by external friendship or mental affinity, but through the one Divine Spirit—God—that dwells within you all. Unless you join together in a spirit of friendship based upon the consciousness of the indwelling God or Reality, you cannot find a true basis for peace and harmony in the world. This is possible only when you shed your preconceived false notions, individual leanings and selfish ambitions. Unless you do that, your egoistic sense will not leave you, and you cannot be true servants of God to serve mankind in the true spirit.

We have been told by sages and saints and great spiritual Masters, that God dwells within our hearts. We must be conscious of Him by turning our mind within through prayer and meditation, and doing all actions as a dedication to Him. Actions done for the service of humanity are really dedicated actions, because He is not only the universal Spirit but also the universal Life. It is this Life within us that makes us active in

this world, and if we are aware of this, our life will flow out spontaneously for the uplift of all in the world. In such service we find real peace and joy. So long as we think we are mere individuals, separate from the universal Reality, we hold to the belief that we do everything. Verily, it is the Divine power, which pervades the universe, that is responsible for what we do. We have forgotten this truth. We are thinking that we are separate from the Divine existence — God. We even go to the length of holding on to the sceptic notion that God does not exist. We deny Him. This is the worst thing that we can do, because by so doing we are entering into a state of darkness, pain and sorrow.

So long as we do not unite our self with God, we shall be scared and distracted throughout life. We shall have no peace or joy. The things that we get in the world do not contribute to our true happiness. We know it from our experience. Ramdas has met big millionaires and Maharajas in India who were supremely unhappy. But those who use the God-given gifts of wealth, power and intelligence for the service of humanity, are really happy. Because, happiness consists in giving, not in possessing and owning.

GIVE UP SENSE OF POSSESSION

We may work hard and earn, but let us not have the sense of possession. It is the sense of possession that makes us miserable. Let us spend or use all things, that God has given us, for the good of all. It is by His power alone we get everything. We have the wrong belief that it is by our effort, by our work, we get wealth and position. It is not by our power, but by the power He gave us, that we are acquiring these things. So, what we have acquired really belongs to Him, and rightly we have to offer them for the service of humanity. In several parts of the world there is misery, want and starvation, and it behoves those who are gifted with the power to acquire wealth, to use it for their service.

This noble ideal your organisation has placed before you. Ramdas fully believes that by remembering God constantly, you will fulfil this ideal, and by doing so, raise yourselves to the highest peace and bliss, which is the sole quest of a human being. Peace comes not by merely possessing things, but by using them for the right purpose. It is truly said by a great saint of India,

'You must possess things, but not be possessed by them.' The wealth you earn by the divine power is not intended to be used for yourselves alone, but also for the benefit of humanity. If you do so, your vision will expand until it reaches the Infinite, and you will be most blissful beings. Bliss is the end and aim of life. Eternal bliss you can have only in this way and no other.

So let your hearts be with God and your hands working for the good of humanity. You can make this possible only if you spare some time, say five or ten minutes every day, exclusively for drawing your mind inward and communing with the Divine, and thereafter live a life in which you will help and uplift those who are fallen, and assist those who are in poverty, want and sorrow. Thus you can make your life sublime by filling it with peace and bliss of the Eternal.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, U. S. A.

20th October, 1954.

° *Speech at the Commodore Hotel*

HOW OBSTACLES CAN BE OVERCOME

Dear Friends, — Today's subject, as announced, is 'How obstacles can be overcome.' Here 'obstacles' means difficulties that confront us when we are attempting to walk on the path of God-realisation. The obstacles are mainly internal or mental. But we also meet with obstacles from outside. When our mind is weak and our will and aspiration for God is not as strong as it should be, we find this restless mind is very difficult to control, and the opposition from outside seems to be like a big mountain standing before us. In this state of our weakness and helplessness, God alone can come to our rescue.

If we are determined to walk on the path and reach the goal, we must pray to Him incessantly and take His holy name, so that by contact with Him, we can strengthen our will and overcome the obstacles we meet with on the path. It is also possible that constant remembrance of God through the chanting of the holy Name will enable us to develop the will power to such an extent, that the very obstacles that daunted us will turn to be of help to us. We even wish we had more obstacles, for, when the obstacles are there, we are able to think more of God, with determination.

RESISTANCE HELPS PROGRESS

Resistance is a sure condition of progress. Whenever you have to struggle against odds, you develop will power. For instance, when you simply move your hands any number of times daily, you cannot develop your muscles. But when there is in your hands a heavy object like a pair of dumb-bells, which offers resistance to the movement of your arms up and down, your muscles are developed. So, resistance is useful for our spiritual progress. If you hang a bicycle in the air by means of a rope and move the pedals, the wheel simply goes round and round, but the bicycle does not move on. But when the bicycle is on the road and is pedalled, it moves forward because of the resistance offered by the ground.

So also, if you want progress, you must be able to overcome obstacles. When a devotee has advanced on the path, he is not afraid of hindrances. The mind may offer resistance, but by continuous remembrance of God, he is able to get over it easily. Later on you find the mind becomes so docile and so obedient, that it yields to you and aids you on the path. When you strive to be the servant of God, naturally the mind, which so long had sway over you, would set up a revolt. So it puts obstacles on your way. But when your devotion for God is strong and your remembrance of Him is continuous, your will power is developed to a high degree. Then your mind submits to the Divine will in you. Formerly it was controlling you, as you were weak. Now you control it, as you are stronger by communion with God.

As regards external obstacles, in the early stages of our endeavour, we get frightened. We do not know how to face them, or how to change the circumstances or conditions which gave rise to them. What we have to do is to face them bravely, by constant remembrance of God. As our mind gets purer, those who opposed us become our helpers. A great saint of India has rightly said, 'When your mind becomes pure, your enemies become your friends.' Thus all circumstances prove to be favourable, as you march towards God. As you progress, God sees to it that the external and internal obstacles gradually disappear as mist before the rising sun. Then you get established in the divine consciousness, your ego-sense having been completely eliminated. Lastly, you reach a state when you take all situations and conditions, in which you are placed, as God-given, and so for your good. You do not find fault with anything. You are able to remain perfectly calm and serene in all situations of life.

KUNTI'S PRAYER TO KRISHNA

Ramdas will now speak to you about Kunti Devi, a great woman devotee of Sri Krishna, the great incarnation of God. She was the mother of five princes who, for some reason, lost their kingdom. According to the vow they took, they had to leave the kingdom and live in the forest for fourteen years. When the widowed mother found that her sons were leaving her alone, she was stricken with grief. She was left alone perfectly helpless. In that distressed condition she remembered Sri Krishna and took to the chanting of His name with all love and devotion. In course of time, her mind became pure and the latent joy in her heart

was revealed, so much so that she used to go into ecstasies at the very thought of Krishna. Her grief completely disappeared. Krishna came to her one day and told her, 'I am highly pleased with your devotion. You may ask of me any boon. I am prepared to grant it to you.' Kunti Devi then replied, 'I pray to you to give me difficulties.' Krishna questioned her why she should ask for difficulties when he, the giver of all good, was ready to grant her any boon. She said, 'O Lord! In difficulty it was that I remembered you and conquered grief. I am now perfectly happy. Your remembrance is now stamped in my mind. If you give me the transitory pleasures of life, I may forget you. If you give me hardships, I shall be able to maintain my contact with you and enjoy the bliss resulting therefrom'.

So sufferings have their use in our life. It is rightly said that sufferings are the manure of life. As manure is necessary for the growth of a plant, so suffering is necessary for our spiritual growth. Kunti Devi, therefore, prayed to the Lord to give her difficulties. But, as for ourselves, we are having sufferings and difficulties without praying for them. That shows God is gracious to us. Without our asking, He has given us what we need most, so that He can turn our minds towards Him, and then grant us liberation and bliss. How kind and how good, indeed, God is!

So, when sufferings come, let us not pray to Him for relief, but ask Him to strengthen us by constant remembrance of Him. We should not be afraid of sufferings. Sufferings affect only the external things which are perishable. Our quest is for the Eternal. God is the only one who is ever with us. Nothing else can be with us always. We are crying over things that are so transitory or impermanent. We neither brought them with us when we were born, nor are we going to take them with us when we depart this life. We are anxious and worried over these things. For instance, a dear relation passes away and we are unhappy. In fact, he does not pass away. He has simply dropped the body. He is ever the immortal Spirit. What is perishable has perished. To feel grief over what is perishable is sheer ignorance or folly.

Our aim is to attain immortality by union with the Divine. When we are on the path, distracting incidents come in our life, such as losses, disappointments, blame, failures, etc. These should only tend to take us more and more towards the Divine. We should not depend on worldly success and attainments, else we

shall be subject to unrest, agitation, misery and sorrow. So we have to withdraw the mind from the external objects and meditate on the Eternal. We should not succumb to the pressure of adversity. We must use them as stepping stones to rise higher and higher towards God. This is the purpose for which sufferings come to us. But we are afraid of them. We want to ward them off. No! We must submit to the will of God and utilize them for our uplift and evolution.

When we try to do away with difficulties, they do not go. On the other hand they increase. But if we bow to the will of God, they pass over without affecting us. When Ramdas was a boy, he used to go for bathing in the sea along with his chums. He found pretty big waves were dashing on the shore. But we used to go to some distance into the sea and bathe. Whenever a big wave came, we were told to bend down. We did so, and the wave passed over our heads without affecting us. Those who stood up opposing the wave were dashed to the ground. So also when difficulties come like waves, what we have to do is to bow down to God and submit to His will, and then we are able easily to get over them.

When we have realised God in all His fullness and perfection, then we have no difficulties and no obstacles in life. We adjust our life according to the conditions and circumstances in which God places us. We have no reason to grumble, complain or feel unhappy at any time. We take it that all conditions are created for us by the wise and all-loving God. Because, our happiness or misery does not depend upon our external conditions, but upon the state of our mind. When the mind is in tune with the Infinite, all conditions are good for us. We do not then find fault with any situation. God knows what is good for us. He knows what and where we should be, what we should or should not have. He is the giver and He is the receiver. So all things come from Him and go back to Him. There is no reason for us to think that anything belongs to us here. They come to us for a short while, and then they leave us. Our eternal companion, our eternal comrade, is God and God alone. We must love Him above all things. He never leaves us. In the face of the relationship with God, all other relations dwindle into nothing. He and He alone is our protector, father, mother and friend. In this way the devotee approaches God and makes Him his own.

A STORY

In this connection Ramdas will tell you a story to show how a simple devotee of God was feeling happy in all situations whether favourable or unfavourable, fortunate or unfortunate, in times of loss or gain, of praise or blame, of honour or dishonour.

In a town in India there lived a humble weaver. He had no family and was living alone. He had a loom on which he used to daily weave cloth. He sold the cloth in the market, and whatever profit was derived from the sale was enough for his daily maintenance. As he had no house to live in, he had his loom installed under a huge tree. After his work for the day was over, he slept near the loom under the tree. When the cloth was ready for sale, he would go to the market and tell openly to everybody how much he paid for the yarn, how much the other sundry expenses came to, how much profit he had added, and at what price he would sell the cloth. People knew that he was a simple and honest man and a great devotee of God. They believed his word and at once purchased the cloth for the price quoted by him. Out of the money thus realised, he would purchase some yarn and other necessary things, and the balance would go for his simple food which satisfied his hunger. He was thus carrying on his simple life.

Just opposite to the place where he had his loom, there was the house of a rich man. One night, a very dark night, this weaver had his meal as usual, and slept soundly under the tree. Two thieves entered the rich man's house, broke open the safe and took many valuable things — clothes and jewellery — which they bundled up and brought out with great difficulty to the place where the weaver slept. The question arose between them as to who should carry the bundle. They could not divide the stolen property between themselves in that darkness. They woke up the weaver and asked him to carry the bundle for them. The weaver unquestioningly took the bundle on his head, as he was always ready to help others in their need. He did not know they were thieves, nor did he care to know. So the two men made the weaver walk in front, themselves following him.

Meanwhile the owner of the house, from which the things were stolen, came to know of the robbery and informed the police, who at once set out in search of the thieves. The weaver with the big bundle and the two men behind him on the road were confronted by a policeman. As soon as the thieves saw the

police, they took to their heels. The weaver with the bundle was caught by the policeman. He examined the bundle and found the stolen goods inside it. He also verified the goods from the rich man whose house was broken into by the thieves. The weaver was taken to the police station and kept under custody. Next morning the weaver was taken before the magistrate for trial. The news spread all over the town that the weaver was arrested on account of theft. People, who knew that he was a humble devotee of God, were surprised when they heard the news, and some of them came to the court to watch the proceedings of the case. The trial started. There was no lawyer to represent the weaver. The magistrate directly questioned the weaver what happened the previous night. The weaver then said:—

“Last night, by the will of God, after my work and meal were over, I was sleeping under my tree as usual. At dead of night, by the will of God, two persons came and woke me up. By the will of God, they placed a big bundle on my head, and by the will of God they asked me to go with them. After walking a short distance, by the will of God, we saw a policeman coming in front of us. By the will of God, the two men who were close at my heels, ran away. By the will of God, the policeman caught me, and by the will of God he took me into custody. By the will of God, I slept well inside the prison. In the morning, by the will of God, I was brought here before you, and by the will of God, you are putting questions to me.”

Hearing the story of the innocent man, the magistrate laughed. He could realise that the weaver was not the real thief. So he was acquitted. The weaver came out, and when his friends asked him what happened, he said, “By God’s will I am released.” He saw only God’s will from beginning to end. He never felt disturbed in any way.

Such submission to the Divine will is the way to be blessed with peace and happiness at all moments of life. Otherwise, we are upset by trifling things. When people honour us, we are happy. When they dishonour us, we are unhappy. When they praise us, we are happy. When they blame us, we are unhappy. See how our mind is rising and falling like the waves of the sea. That shows we have not surrendered to the Divine will. If we have truly surrendered, we remain calm and serene in all circumstances. That is the goal taught by saints and sages.

TRANSCEND THE DWANDWAS

In the Bhagavad Gita, emphasis is laid on transcendence of the Dwandwas or pairs of opposites. If you take your stand on the universal Truth beyond all change, the impact of the vicissitudes of life will not affect you. In fact, the sense of gain and loss and other pairs of opposites is only a creation of the mind. When the giver is He and the receiver is He, and He is all, where is the question of gain and loss? If you receive with one hand, you give by the other hand. You take a thing from one pocket and put it in another.

Ramdas has wandered all over India under trying conditions. Many people think he must have undergone great discomforts and would consequently have been miserable. But his life, from beginning to end, was free from conflict and so from grumbling. He was perfectly happy whether he had to fast or eat, whether he had to walk long distances, which produced blisters on his feet, or whether he had a nice place or roadside ground or caves to rest. In all conditions he was calm and serene, because God willed it so. He arranged everything for him for his good.

We find in life that the same object that gives us happiness at one time, does not at another. This does not mean that the object loses the power of giving happiness. Our mental attitude changes. For instance, when we are hungry and find before us fine sweets which we like best, we eat with good taste and feel great joy. But after a short time, we do not want the sweets any more, or rather we prefer to have them taken away from our presence. The very sight of them is disgusting. The sweets have not changed, but our taste for them has changed. It is said rightly by Milton, 'Mind in its own place can make a hell of heaven and a heaven of hell.' Hell is within us; heaven is within us. When we have no faith in God and allow our mind to burn with low desires, we are verily in hell. When the mind is in union with God and is at peace, we are in heaven. We can imagine how miserable we make ourselves by forgetting God, and hanging on to external objects and conditions, for happiness!

If external conditions could give us happiness or misery, when Ramdas was passing through the first year's life as chronicled in the book 'In Quest of God', he would have been the most miserable creature in the world, since he was subject to every kind of physical discomfort. Often he had to spend nights on roadsides, sleeping on hard ground full of pebbles, and to live

in dark and dirty caves. But Ramdas was all along feeling supreme bliss, for he was in union with God. It was a rare and ineffable bliss. Even millionaires would have envied him because they could not even dream of getting such a joy. Thus, it is proved that external conditions cannot grant the real joy and peace.

A devotee says, 'O God, you may put me into hell, but I can make heaven of it by remembering you. But if you put me in heaven and do not give me your remembrance, I shall be verily in hell'. Where is hell? It is within us. Where is heaven? It is also within us. Therefore what we have to do is to remember God constantly, pray to Him to make our hearts pure, and realise our identity with Him. Then we can have perennial joy in all situations. God is always kind and merciful. There is nothing wrong with the world. Each one in the world deserves our love. All are embodiments of our own Self. If we hate anybody, we hate ourselves. If we love anybody, we love ourselves.

This is Ramdas' last talk here. Before closing, he invokes the Lord Almighty seated in your hearts to shower His choicest blessings and grace upon you all.

AT THE EAGELSON HALL, SEATTLE.

22nd October, 1954.

PEACE AND LOVE

Dear friends,— Ramdas is speaking in the third person. He is a humble servant and child of God. By God's will he left India on a world tour to propagate the ideal of universal love and service. You know India, from the most ancient times, stands for the eternal verities, the spiritual values of life, more than the material, and that India is backward in the material side of life, though it has very much advanced on the spiritual side.

When we came to Europe and America we found in these countries considerable material advancement by which life has been made very easy as regards procurement of food, clothing and other comforts of life. On the spiritual side Ramdas does not say these countries are very much left behind. He sees there is keen hunger in the hearts of the people of the Western world for the spiritual experience and attainment. That is as it should be. We must combine the materialism of the West and the spiritualism of the East in order to have a balanced life. We must not only overcome the obstacles that come in the way of having all our material wants fulfilled but also have our soul united with the Eternal.

God is at the root of this universal existence. When we work for the material comforts of our life forgetting Him entirely, we miss that peace and joy which we would get if our life is attuned to the Eternal. We should realise that whatever we do is by the power which God has given us. We forget this and think that, as individuals, we are doing everything ourselves. This is the reason why our soul is always restless and has no peace. Peace can come only when we know that the universal Spirit is the basis of the manifestation we see before us. The individual alone is not the whole thing. The universal has also to be taken into consideration. As we attune our life with the universal life, we know the true meaning of life. Through this knowledge we can ourselves find peace and then impart peace to others.

TRUE HAPPINESS

You know happiness is the goal of our life. Happiness can come to us only by tuning ourselves with the immortal Spirit

whose nature is pure bliss and peace. That universal Spirit is dwelling in everyone of us. We are seeking this happiness in the external life where we do not get it. We know from experience that whatever we get from outside does not contribute to real happiness. Happiness lies in recognising the existence of the divine Spirit within us. As we turn our mind inward, in a state of meditation and prayer, we find that true happiness is not without but within us. So we are asked by sages and saints of the world to turn our vision inward and find our source in God. Unless we realise the basis of our life as the immortal Spirit, we can never know true peace in the world, in spite of our material enjoyments and high position. In the course of his wanderings, Ramdas has met very wealthy persons who were not at all happy. It is clear from this that happiness does not consist in possessing things and that one gets real peace only when one's life is tuned with the Immortal within.

Therefore we should, from time to time, draw our vision inward and tune it with the Eternal. As we go on praying to the Divine and remain in communion with Him for longer and longer hours every day, all our mental agitations, disturbances and unrest gradually disappear and the mind is bathed in an ocean of peace. God stands for peace. The mind gets in tune with that peace and is absorbed in it. Then we live a life which is entirely different from what it was before we got this experience. We learn to love everybody alike, we do not see any difference on the external plane of life between things and between individuals. We see only unity everywhere, based upon the recognition of the universal, all-pervading Spirit. For, we see that all the forms in the universe are the expressions of that universal Spirit. We live, move and have our being in that universal Spirit. Our aim to attain happiness is now fulfilled. We get this happiness not only when we sit silently, but also when we are active in our daily life. We are able to do all actions spontaneously and find nothing but joy, because the source of all actions is God who is all joy. Whatever comes from that source must give nothing but joy.

SPIRITUAL SOLUTION OF WORLD PROBLEMS

Over petty ideologies and differences we are quarrelling among ourselves. We see countries are preparing for war to satisfy their trivial ambitions for material power, position and

authority. To bring about peace in the world, political leaders have been organising councils and conferences; but these have not produced any favourable result. The tension is only increasing day by day and we are afraid that the avalanche of a world-war might fall on us any day and destroy everything. Such a catastrophe can be avoided only when we solve our problems recognising the suzerainty of the universal Spirit over the material world. We should go deep down within us to find a sure basis for settling our differences and live in harmony and peace with each other. As it is, we are simply groping on the surface where we cannot find the real solution. On the surface we can never have our differences composed nor find the true basis for establishing peace and goodwill. We see at present that hatred is only increasing.

Jesus came to tell us that we have to give love for hate. Love can destroy hate provided our love is pure. It is love in the spiritual sense and not based on any physical considerations. If we love another on the physical plane, we expect something in return. It is therefore selfish love. Absolutely unselfish love alone can put down hate, evil and discord in the world. If we develop this love, everyone of us, there will be a feeling of unity and a spirit of friendship prevailing amongst us. All the evil tendencies will then disappear from the minds of people.

God is the great unifying force by having recourse to whom we can have peace ourselves and can live in peace with others. But what do we find in the world? It is entirely a different picture. In the name of God, in the name of religion, people are fighting and killing each other. This is indeed strange. There are so many sects and so many religions and each one is fighting the other. Such people are blind to the fact that the one God who is the Master and Lord of the world is the father and mother of everyone of us and that we are all His children. We do not remember Him, we deny Him. So we are fighting amongst ourselves. One group of people say to the other group that their God is greater or more powerful than the God of others. To fight over such things is ridiculous. On the political field we do find differences and squabbles. This is quite natural because there, people do not see things squarely. But there is no excuse for quarrels in the religious field. It is not enough to talk of God. Until we keep the mind under control through prayer, meditation and surrender to the Divine, we cannot get over the confusion and discord in our life and in our relation to our fellow

beings. So let us sink all our differences and stand united as children of the one Parent and pray to Him to give us light so that all our evil tendencies may be destroyed and all of us live together in perfect goodwill.

THE WAY TO AVOID WORLD-WAR

That is the way to avoid the breaking out of another world-war. Ramdas feels that such a catastrophe would never come. God will not allow another war to take place by which his children will be completely destroyed. But we must all play our part. What we have to do is to continuously keep ourselves in tune with God. It is not possible for us to expect all members of the human race to join in this effort. It is enough if a few people in each country pray to the Divine every day and produce a peace atmosphere around them by communing with Him. They can spread that peace everywhere and help to drive away from the minds of others all commotions and disturbances. In this way, ultimately, they can bring about a peaceful atmosphere all over the world and avert the coming of the war. War will then become impossible. This is a sacred earth where many saints, sages and incarnations were born to propagate the message of love and peace. We must accept what they have given us to illumine ourselves in the light of God and live in perfect love, goodwill and harmony with each other. In the twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, the great scripture of the Hindus, Lord Krishna speaks about divine love. According to Him, if you want to really gain the status of immortality and attain liberation in which you can really enjoy oneness with the immortal Spirit, you have to surrender yourself entirely to Him and eradicate from your mind the evil desires born of ignorance which makes you believe that you are not one with the Divine. The Lord has taught us in the Bhagavad Gita the three kinds of Yoga — Bhakti, Jnana and Karma. Bhakti Yoga stands for the development of our heart in order to fill it with infinite love. Karma Yoga stands for the dedication of all our activities to God and Jnana Yoga relates to our intellectual advancement till the intellect is illumined with eternal wisdom. The intellect must merge itself in the universal Spirit, the heart must flow out in a spirit of spontaneous love to God and all our actions must be dedicated to Him who is the master of all action. Let us not forget that the divine power is responsible for all the movements and changes in

the world. When we are one with the Divine in our intellect, heart and action, we attain to a Yoga which is rightly named as the Purna Yoga or integral Yoga. Thereby we find ourselves evolved in all aspects, becoming one with the Divine as the all-pervading Spirit and also as the universal manifestation.

NON-VIOLENCE MEANS UNIVERSAL LOVE

Buddha who came after Krishna, several hundreds of years before Jesus, was a great force in the world. He preached non-violence like Mahatma Gandhi, who recently passed away and who was of the same stature as Buddha in every respect. Non-violence is only another name for universal love. If we love with all our heart, we never wish ill of anybody and never inflict pain on anybody. Non-violence and love are synonymous. If we wish to be absolutely non-violent, our heart must be purged of all low emotions which generally urge us to do things that cause injury, pain and sorrow to others. This evil mentality persists so long as there is selfishness in us. Selfishness can be completely eradicated by surrender to the Divine. When our surrender is complete we become truly non-violent and truly loving, because in that state of surrender the springs of love which are hidden in us open up and we are filled with it to overflowing, as it were. Now, by our contact with others we can share with them the joy and love which we have derived. So this attainment, through the purification of the mind and the awakening of love by complete surrender to the Divine will, goes a long way towards the creation of peace everywhere.

This is the path which was also taught by Lord Buddha. He said that our desires must be completely extinguished, because desires are the cause of man's losing control over himself and doing things for which he repents afterwards. It behoves us to follow the teachings of these great Souls and live our life in accordance with the great ideals they have placed before us and make our life supremely blessed. Otherwise, by getting away from that great Source from which we have come, we shall be making our life unhappy, without knowing where we are, what we are doing, and where we shall reach. Let us open ourselves to the influence of these great Masters who came to liberate the world from the thralldom of ignorance.

MAHATMA GANDHI'S NON-COOPERATION

Q: What was your opinion about Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement?

Ramdas: Mahatma Gandhi started the non-cooperation movement in 1922 or so and Ramdas met him once in Mangalore. His non-cooperation did not mean that he disliked or hated the British. There was no room for hatred at all in the movement. There is a famous saying of a great saint of India, "Hate the sin, but love the sinner." Gandhiji's heart was full of love towards everybody, towards the British, and towards all. His love was so vast that it covered the whole globe. But he did not want people to do evil. He wanted India to gain independence, ending the British rule. His way of gaining independence was through absolute non-violence. He thought that was possible only when the people did not co-operate with the rulers. So he advised them to stand away from the British Government. He tried to lead the people on the right path and succeeded in making India free. But he was not completely satisfied, as he was not successful to the extent he wished in making the people follow the right path. He wanted them to gain not only the external independence but also the internal. He wanted to get every soul free from the lower desires, pride, anger, etc. In that he found he did not succeed, although, for the time being, he created a wave of enthusiasm in the hearts of people and made them rise high. By this he was able to work wonders. But there was a fall, and he was disappointed when the Hindus and Moslems started fighting with each other. He could not bear to witness it. So, by his own will, as it were, he brought about his end.

Q: Was he not assassinated?

Ramdas: Yes, he was. But he must have wished that kind of death. When a saint intently wishes that a certain thing should happen, it does happen. Gandhiji was a God-man, filled with the light and peace of God. He said at one time that he would rather be dead than see so much of confusion going on. Two days before he was shot, it seems he expressed a desire that it would be better if he had been shot than be made to witness a holocaust. His non-violence stood for pure, unselfish and glorious love.

Q: Do you feel that our desire to love one another may be attributed to our wish to be free from hate?

Ramdas: If we love each other, we are going nearer God. When Jesus was asked by his disciples to give a last message before he was crucified, he said: "Love one another". If we love one another, God will surely be pleased. That is the best way you can please Him. One man wanted to be accepted by Jesus as a disciple.* Jesus told him, "If you have a single enemy on the earth, go and make friends with him and then come to me." The chief condition for realising God is to love all and to have no hatred towards anybody. So this love which is human in character will lead to divine love, which is based upon our spiritual kinship. •

AT THE CHAPEL OF THE CHURCH OF THE PEOPLE, SEATTLE
22nd October, 1954.

DIVINE GRACE

Dear friends,—Ramdas is a child of God and today God has chosen for him the subject 'Divine Grace' to speak upon. The subject is a profound one because he who has got divine grace can alone know its greatness and glory. Divine grace does not lend itself to expression. You cannot tell others the full significance of divine grace and what your reactions to it are when it acts on you. However in a humble way Ramdas shall try to present to you the meaning of grace as it was revealed to him, as it came to him, and produced the necessary change in him.

Divine grace comes to us as the light and power of God and it quickens our spirit and awakens our sleeping soul. Thereafter we pine for the vision of God. We want to see Him, contact Him, and commune with Him always; but we find so many obstacles confronting us on the path. We pray to Him day after day to grant us the necessary strength to battle against the inner forces that try to keep us down in the clutches of our lower nature, because as long as we are subject to the lower nature, we have no rest and peace. When the awakening comes to us through Grace, we know that we must get rid of this lower nature and reveal the higher nature in us, so that we can uninterruptedly commune with God. It is said in the luminous words of Jesus: "Blessed is he who is pure in heart, because he shall see God." So the chief condition for seeing God is absolute purity of heart. This is what we have to achieve before we can hope to realise God.

When Grace has awakened us, necessarily we shall be striving to keep our mind constantly engaged in the remembrance of God. Remembrance comes to us automatically because God's grace has started its work in us. This Grace, in order to keep our mind ever in tune with Him, brings us in contact with spiritual Masters who are illumined with the light, love and power of God. It is this contact that establishes us on the path and guides us until we reach the goal, until we see Him in our heart, and see Him everywhere about us. Then the love of a universal nature flowers in our heart, its fragrance spreads all

around and ultimately we realise our identity with the Divine and feel His presence all around us.

THE GREAT CONSUMMATION

This great consummation can be achieved only through the contact of an illumined, holy, and purified soul. Grace brings us in contact with such a soul and thereafter our life is sweetened through and through; the pride in us bends before the almighty power of the Lord and we become gentle, meek, kind and loving. Hard and bitter thoughts leave us; we become forgiving and free from illwill, hate and dislike towards anyone. We surrender ourselves in the hands of God, become humble in spirit and lose our lower individual consciousness in the higher universal consciousness of the Divine. Then it is that we know that we are the manifestations or expressions of that divine or universal Spirit. In that state we put into practice the great teaching of Jesus, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." We love our fellow beings as we love ourselves, because ourselves and the Self that pervades everywhere, seated in the hearts of all beings, are one and the same thing. We love all human beings because God is seated in their hearts. Jesus has told us: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you"; and in that Heaven verily the Lord resides. We have therefore through the power of Grace, to draw our vision inward and find Him within ourselves and see Him there by constant tuning of our mind with Him. We then attain the necessary purity for realising Him.

God in the form of great incarnations and spiritual Masters comes down from time to time in different climes for the uplift of humanity and leads them on the path that takes them to the highest spiritual eminence and union with God. Amongst these Ramdas can make mention here principally of the three great spiritual Masters, Jesus, Krishna and Buddha. You know how, in their own times, their mere contact awakened hundreds and thousands of souls and turned them towards the Divine. Those who never believed in God were made to believe and those who had already faith in God were made to go forward on the path and were helped to reach Him. You know that even the persecutors of such great souls received their guidance and grace. Ramdas need not tell you about the wonderful transformation that took place in a persecutor of Jesus who by His grace became a great saint known later as St. Paul.

So the condition for attaining Grace is simply mysterious. People say that we must prepare ourselves to receive His grace, but how can we prepare unless He gives us the power to prepare ourselves. It is rightly said by a devotee: "Oh God, I remember You because You remembered me first." It is He who must create in us the intense longing to have Him. Without that, it will not be possible for us to seek Him and find Him. That spirit of seeking Him and striving to have Him must come to us through His grace. That is why we say Grace comes to us in a wonderful way and that we do not know what conditions we have to fulfil in order to entitle ourselves to get it. Even those who persecuted the Masters and who denied Him also got grace. It is through His mercy that He turns us towards Him, acknowledges us and makes us His own.

RAMDAS' TRANSFORMATION

Ramdas can tell you from his own life that until he was 38 years old, he had not much of faith in God. It was after that age that one day he felt he was shaken to his very foundation and found that the life he so far lived was in vain and that he must strive to realise God in this very life. This hunger and thirst seized him. It came to him in such a mysterious way that he never knew he was prepared for it. It came to him as a mysterious flow from the Divine. Like a light that was suddenly lit, it destroyed the darkness within, woke him up, and led him on the path. Thereafter he felt he was not doing anything by his own will. God was making him do everything. He felt that he was possessed by God, as it were, and he could not live the ordinary life as he lived before. He was completely under the control of God and was inspired to dedicate his entire life to Him. He could not claim anything as his own, he could not even say that his life was his own, because everything belonged to God. God transformed him and purified him in such a way that He could completely possess him, make him His own and absorb him into His transcendent and all-powerful being.

Thereafter his one mission was to tell everybody about God, whether they were prepared to listen or not. He simply poured himself out talking about the grace of God and assured his listeners that, if they also got His grace, they would be entirely different beings, all that was undivine in them would disappear and all that was divine in them would be revealed. The sorrows

and miseries of all kinds and the restlessness of the mind that had seized the soul, the darkness and evil that had covered it would be wiped out by the grace of God and they would be transformed into the likeness of innocent and pure children and they would become spontaneous in whatever they did. They would be completely under the protection of God. God would envelop them through and through and make them feel His presence inside and outside everywhere. So in order to entitle ourselves to His grace we have nothing else to do but to wait on Him because, at any time, His grace can take us up and lead us onwards.

As for you all, there is no need for grace to come to you, because it has already come. You can feel it. Otherwise, why should you like to hear about divine grace, about God, and as to how you can make yourself fit to receive His power and light? That can be possible only when He has awakened your hearts and when He has poured His grace on you. You pray to Him to purify you through and through, and thereby enjoy the peace and bliss of the immortal. That is the aim of human life and you have come to know of it. It is not that you have yet to know about it, but you already know it. Now you must be led by God just as a mother leads the child. For that you must put yourselves in His hand, surrender yourselves completely to Him, seek His guidance and hold on to Him.

THE OBSTACLE OF THE EGO

This is not an easy thing to do, because the ego asserts itself and you often forget Him; your contact with Him is lost and you find yourselves like children that miss the mother. So you have now and again to pray to Him and cry to Him so that He can make you feel His presence with you and guide you to the goal. When sometimes you are in difficult situations, you do not get guidance easily, because your pride stands in the way. In such cases you must bend yourselves before Him and pray to Him in all humility wiping yourselves out entirely. In that state of self-effacement, if you are able to pray to Him to lead you onward and make you once for all His, He will definitely listen to you. Contact of holy souls is what lends strength and gives you guidance so that you can progress on the path without any interruption and walk safely feeling all the time His presence.

NAME IS THE ONLY REMEDY

In this connection Ramdas can tell you that God in His mercy put into the mouth of Ramdas His glorious name and said: "Child, go on repeating the Name constantly, and by that you will attain absolute peace and bliss." Ramdas did so and he is now enjoying bliss ceaselessly. By constant repetition of the Name, all other thoughts vanish from the mind and the Divine thought alone remains. Our object of completely surrendering ourselves to God can be fulfilled only by our having a continuous thought of Him in our mind. During Ramdas' wanderings in Europe he met many devotees of God among whom a few came and told him that the name of Jesus was very sweet. They had tasted the Name and had enjoyed the resultant bliss. He who has tasted the Name alone knows how sweet it is. For eradicating the ego sense and surrendering ourselves to the Divine there is no easier way than continuous thought of God resulting from the repetition of His holy name.

Name will take you to Him because Name and God are not different. Name is the light of God. If you are basking in the light of God you are surely feeling His presence always with you. You will feel at once one with Him when you are raised to the ecstasy in which you not only feel His presence within but all differences are lost. Having gained this experience, that is after realising your identity with Him, you can be His servant or child, talk of Him, think of Him, and serve Him in all ways and enjoy the bliss, not only in your inner communion but also in all your outer activities. Work is not detrimental to God-realisation and God-vision. You have only to do everything as an offering to Him and when you do so you can never go wrong. Your life will be thoroughly purified. When His grace has come, you can find for yourself how your life has changed. The life that was at first disorderly, in which so many evils were done, completely disappears and you become a transformed being. His light comes to you and thereafter you do no wrong but give your love to all. You have no enemy in the world and no illwill towards anybody. You have nothing but kindness and goodness towards everybody. Your heart is good and everything is good to you, because Grace has thoroughly purified you. In a pure heart alone God's light shines and He reveals Himself.

When Ramdas was longing for Him day and night, remembering Him by taking His holy name, He directed Ramdas to several

saints and such contacts perfected that experience which God gave him through His grace. The light, influence and power that radiate from saints and come to us remove every obstacle on our path and help us eradicate all low desires, and lift us from the human to the divine plane. We are fully illumined with the light, love and bliss of God, because God is love, light and bliss. He reveals Himself in us and makes us embodiments of love and joy.

EXCHANGE THE TRANSITORY FOR THE ETERNAL

God is defined as love. God is eternal, so love is eternal. God is peace and therefore the peace which is synonymous with God is eternal. We get from God the eternal and everlasting life if only we offer at His feet the transitory life that we are leading. So in exchange for the transitory, we get from Him the eternal. But we don't want Him. We want to struggle for so many things of the world, and depend upon them for happiness and peace, while God who is infinite joy and peace ever resides in us. What we have to offer Him is only the perishable in order to get in exchange the imperishable. God says, "Offer yourself to me, I will give you eternal joy and peace." This dedication of ourselves to Him and doing things in His name, can be possible only by His grace.

Then, naturally, the question arises why we should have to strive for anything at all. Why should we make any effort, when grace is everything? We have to strive in order to know that by striving we do not get anything, but only by His grace. There are many who are practising severe austerities, fasts and so on. But they find they have not got Him. This is because His grace has not come to them. Only if you put down your pride and ego-sense, you will have Him. So long as the ego-sense persists, there is no hope. Let the ego struggle until it becomes helpless and surrenders itself to the will of God. Then His power and glory will be revealed to you. So God's help comes when we surrender ourselves entirely to Him. His grace alone can transform us. His grace alone can change the course of our life and make us struggle to achieve Him. And as we struggle on, our ego-sense gradually diminishes, until we realise our helplessness and surrender ourselves completely to Him. Our life is like a river. It should go and join the ocean, and having joined the ocean, still continue to flow towards it. We should as

quickly as possible unite with the infinite ocean of divine existence.

The power of Grace is wonderful. In India there were great saints who by their contact had redeemed many fallen souls — those who were living a life of vice. They were saved by the touch of these saints and, sometimes, by the mere sight of these saints. The great saints pour on us their power for our inward illumination through sight, thought or touch. If they think well of us, we are elevated. Look at the way how Jesus redeemed many of his disciples. He had twelve disciples who were fishermen, but they later became fishers of men. So contact the holy men, those who have realised God, those who live, move and have their being in the universal Spirit. They may come to us, or we may go to them. They are the saviours of the world. They are so humble, pure, kind and forgiving. Even people who persecute them are redeemed by them. Look at the power of forgiveness. By our contact with them, we grow into their likeness.

EXAMPLE OF THE SANDALWOOD

Often the example is given of a sandalwood tree which is common in India. It grows in the forest and it is said that in course of time the trees that grow near about it also turn into sandalwood by the breeze that blows from it. The nature of the sandalwood tree is such that, even if a man goes to it with a hatchet and cuts it, it gives only fragrance in return. Similarly, even to the persecutors, saints give only kindness, mercy, and final redemption. This is the nature of saints. The very contact of such saints proves to be surely helpful in our progress towards attaining inner purity and all that is necessary for the God-vision which is the quest of our life. The quest of our life is eternal peace and eternal freedom which we can find only in God and nowhere else. Name, power, position, and all other worldly attainments cannot grant us this peace.

Everything is possible by God's grace. If we only have a keen desire to realise Him, He will make the path easy for us. He will provide us with all the facilities necessary and finally enable us to realise Him. There is a story in this connection.

There was a poor man in a country. He was very anxious that his king should visit him one day. But his condition was so poor that he could not make the necessary arrangements to receive

the royal guest. However, he expressed his wish to the king who at once agreed to visit him. The king knew that the man lived in a very small cottage. So he sent in advance everything that was necessary for his reception at the cottage. Royal messengers went with all the things and asked the man to make use of them and also helped him in finalising the arrangements. They got the house cleaned, spread the carpet, arranged the furniture, made the necessary decorations, and brought flowers, garlands etc. When everything was ready, the king paid his visit. Thus the man's wish was fulfilled.

So also, if we invite God to take His seat in us, He will do everything necessary. He will Himself purify our hearts and take His seat there. So the only thing we have to do is to pray to Him to come to us. Nothing more. He will see to everything else. If your heart is sincere, you will feel the need for His coming and He will surely come to you. If your life is disorderly, He will see that it is set right and when He comes to you once, your life becomes blessed.

WE ARE ALL PRODIGAL SONS

God is all love and compassion. Ramdas can never believe He could punish us. If we are punished it is because of our own actions. If that is not the case, if He were to judge us according to our merit, He will have to reject us till eternity, for there is no end to our wrong actions and we shall never be eligible to approach Him. But how does He look at us? He looks at us with all love and compassion as a mother looks at her child. The mother does not care for any number of defects which the child may have. She does not take notice of them. God is far more loving than a human mother. His mercy is so glorious and His forgiving nature is indescribable. We have heard of the story in the Bible of the prodigal son. We are all prodigal sons. Look at the way how He forgives all our sins and accepts us. He does it by His grace. He must draw us towards Him. Otherwise we cannot go to Him, we cannot even think of Him.

Thus the mystery of grace is very difficult to explain. We have seen the very worst of criminals purified in no time by Him and given His vision. In ancient India there was a robber. He used to rob people passing in front of his hut in a forest and sometimes he even killed them. Once a saint was passing that way singing God's name to himself with a musical instrument. The

robber ran towards him and caught hold of the instrument. The saint asked him, "What is it that you are doing?" The robber replied: "I am doing the right thing for me." The saint told him that he was committing a very grave sin by robbing people and killing them. But the robber argued that it was no sin at all, because what he did was only for the maintenance of his family. Then the saint said: "No, you are wrong. You will have to suffer for whatever sins you commit. Go and ask your wife and children if they are prepared to share your sins."

The robber quietly went home and asked his wife and children if they were prepared to share his sins. They refused to do so. Now the robber's eyes were opened and he realised that he alone had to suffer for all the sins he committed. He returned and fell at the feet of the saint and begged of him to show him the way of redemption from sins. The saint advised him to remember God and repeat His name. Thus the saint's grace came to the robber who thereafter gave up all his evil ways, took to repetition of God's name given by the saint and his life was completely transformed. He is now known as Valmiki, one of the greatest saints of India.

This is only one instance, but there are thousands of others. When grace comes to us and we start remembering God, we wonder whether we deserve the Grace at all. We cannot be sufficiently grateful to God. In what way can we express our gratitude to Him? We can only glorify Him, think of His greatness and power. His power, mercy, and forgiving nature and unbounded love for us are beyond description. If we think of His qualities we simply go into ecstasy. This itself will do to purify our mind.

Today when this subject of divine Grace was chosen by God for him, Ramdas was at his wit's end as to what to talk. For, whatever he can talk about Grace will be inadequate. He cannot find words to express the mystery of Grace, still he struggles to find the appropriate words to tell you what Grace can do for us. If those who had seen Ramdas before Grace came to him are now with him, they can say what difference there is between his two lives. It is a wonderful transformation, and Grace alone was responsible for it. Ramdas can talk in praise of Divine grace for hours together, and still he will not be satisfied because Grace has made him what he is now, a humble servant of God and a confiding child of His. He goes about from place to place only

to talk about Him. He has come so far from India, travelling over 12,000 miles. It is a great joy for him to talk about God and His grace. However much he glorifies Him, it is not enough. Such a God is dwelling in the hearts of you all. May He shower His grace on you and fully illumine you with His light, power, love and joy!

There is none in the world so dear to us as God. We unnecessarily cling on to so many perishable things and call them ours. But we do not realise that when we were born we brought nothing with us and that when we depart from this world, we are not going to take anything with us. God alone is our eternal father, mother and friend. Our relationship is with Him. All other things are passing. Let us play the game of life in a straightforward and honest way. Let us do everything in a state of surrender to Him and give our life in complete dedication to Him, and be helpful to our fellow beings. Service of humanity is service of God. There are several ways in which we can help our fellow beings. We can give them food when they are hungry, clothe them when they are naked, give them education when they are ignorant, and give them the touch of the Divine by ourselves living that life and awakening in them the desire and longing for God. These are the many ways in which we can serve people. We must love them in spite of their weaknesses and frailties. When Grace descends upon all in the world, their weaknesses will automatically go. Jesus has rightly said, "Forgive them, Oh Lord, because they do not know what they do!" Look at the large-heartedness of this great Saviour. He knew his persecutors did not know what they did and there was no reason why they should be hated or disliked. They did things through ignorance and ignorance was no crime. You must be compassionate, kind and sympathetic towards all, and try to lead them on the right path that leads to God. A saint was once praying to God saying: "Oh God, let me not see any fault in anybody." The moment you see fault in others, your mind becomes impure. The innocent heart does not see faults. The saints give out love to all alike. They do not see any faults in others because they see the Divine in all.

Shall we have a few minutes silent meditation? Let us all close our eyes, sit still, taking our gaze inward and think of God within us.

. (A few minutes' silent meditation followed.)

Questions and Answers

Q: If we really believe in gentleness, we never have to feel guilty. Some people think of God as one who takes revenge and they feel guilty.

Ramdas: Gentleness can come only when we think of God's greatness. Because we forget Him, our pride raises its head. If we always remember God and His greatness, we shall be humble and gentle, and do all our work in the right way, guided by Him from within. We must put ourselves in His hands and pray to Him to guide us so that we may always lead a righteous life. If His protection is there, no temptations can pull us down.

Q: Do we not come into the sense of love and oneness?

Ramdas: The sense of oneness and love can come only through His grace. Otherwise we cannot achieve these qualities.

Q: After death what?

Ramdas: The soul does not die, only body dies. If we think of God always and surrender ourselves to Him, we become one with Him. If not, we shall have to come again on this earth assuming another body and work up our salvation. Sometimes we do things out of ignorance and then pass away. The body drops. We are not to be judged by the actions done in that life and condemned for ever. God gives us further opportunities to improve ourselves, to approach Him and thereby get rid of all evils within us. He showers His grace on us to enable us to redeem ourselves and become fit for immortality.

PRACTISE WHAT THE BOOKS TEACH

Q: How far do the Books help us?

Ramdas: We are not merely to read the scriptures, but we have to put into practice what we have read and known. We must do what He bids us to do and follow the path chalked out by Him. We must allow His spirit to enter into us and transform us.

Q: In regard to the grace of God, is it true that what we can do is to take whatever happens as the gift of Grace from Christ and not from ourselves? I am asking this question in regard to the essence of religion, the atonement and the gift rather than the words.

Ramdas: It is perfectly true. Ramdas does not think that what he says is in anyway different from what the orthodox church, or any other system of religion teaches. We have to put into practice what we are taught and we must be restless for that, so that God may help us. We simply read the scriptures and we think God will do everything for us. Whenever we do anything wrong, we must feel so unhappy at heart that we must with all eagerness call upon God to see that we do not commit such evil actions.

Q: What is hell and what is heaven?

Ramdas: "Mind in its own place can make a hell of heaven and a heaven of hell." When the mind thinks of God and is perfectly peaceful and happy and contented, we are virtually in heaven. Here and now let us remain in heaven. Then we will ever remain in heaven and there will be no hell for us here or hereafter.

THE MEANING OF DREAMS

Q: How do we symbolise dreams?

Ramdas: It is not worth while. We must transcend all symbols and go to God. We must have union with God. If dreams are related to God, they might help you. Anything relating to worldly achievements, sufferings and loss, need not be taken into consideration at all. If you dream of Jesus or God, you must feel that your mind is on the right path. It shows that even in dreams you are thinking of God. Very often we miss God in dreams.

AT THE CHAPEL OF THE CHURCH OF THE PEOPLE, SEATTLE,
23rd October, 1954.

SELF-SURRENDER

Dear friends,— Today the subject for discourse is 'Self-Surrender.' Here self stands for the ego-sense in us, which is a great obstacle to our realising God who is dwelling within us. In fact, our real being is ever one with the universal Spirit, one with the universal Light and one with the universal Power. We cannot understand and experience this state because the self or ego in us is so predominant that it shuts us from the vision of the supreme Reality. So the first thing we have to do is to surrender up the ego so that we can come by our spiritual heritage, namely, the experience and realisation of the infinite, universal spirit of God, and thus liberate ourselves.

In the Indian scriptures we find that no distinction is made between the Soul and God. The Soul itself is God. The Self itself is God. We are told first to realise the oneness of the Soul with God and then with the universe; in other words, to realise that our Soul, universe and God are one and the same. In this supreme realisation the ego-sense is found to be utterly false. In the Bhagavad Gita, the great scripture of the Hindus, you will find three kinds of Yogas taught for our spiritual uplift and illumination. These are Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga. We have, through meditation, to identify the individual self with the universal Self. The universal Self is the static, calm and silent all-pervading Spirit. We have also to look upon the whole universe before us, consisting of all beings and creatures, as the very expression of that supreme Reality. We have further to know that one universal power is activating all things in the world.

THE END OF ALL SADHANA

If we realise God in these three aspects, through Bhakti, Jnana and Karma Yogas, the ego-sense disappears and we reach the end of all Sadhana. It is now that our actions flow spontaneously as willed by the divine power, our heart flows out in love to all beings because our eyes see Him only everywhere and we are conscious of our identity with the universal Spirit

which has expressed itself as the universal manifestation and universal movement.

The great incarnations, saints and sages that came into the world in different climes and different ages, were all the embodiments of this supreme Truth. We have not to take them as mere human beings, which they appear to be outwardly. We can behold infinite love, eternal wisdom and omnipotent power revealed and expressed in their life and activities. It is by their contact, by their grace, and by meditating on them that we draw inspiration which is necessary for turning our vision inward and to realise that we and the all-pervading supreme Spirit are one. Having realised that the one Spirit alone exists and that we are actuated by that universal power, our ego-sense completely disappears. This is the state of absolute surrender. Surrender denotes the elimination of the ego-sense. It is only the ego-sense not the ego, that is responsible for our feeling that we are separate from the universal presence of God. If we try to trace the ego we will find that it does not exist at all. It is due to ignorance that we feel that we are separate from the universal presence. So, what we have to do is only to shake off the ego-sense, rise above it by surrender to the Divine, and thereby realise our unity and oneness with Him in all His aspects as the Spirit, as the manifestations and as the power active in the universe.

THREE SYSTEMS OF PHILOSOPHY

Ramdas referred to the three Yogas as described in the Bhagavad Gita. They relate to three systems of philosophy which obtain in India among the believers or among the seekers of God. The Sankhya philosophy distinguishes the Prakriti or nature from the Purusha or the Spirit. Nature is the manifest and Spirit is the unmanifest. The unmanifest is real and the manifest is unreal. We have to identify ourselves with the Unmanifest in meditation through what you call Buddhi Yoga. We lose ourselves in the super-conscious existence of the Divine and realise that we are He. This is Jnana Yoga.

Then comes Bhakti Yoga which is based on Jnana. The Vedanta wants us to behold the whole universe as Brahman. To the Bhakta, whatever he sees is nothing but the manifestation of Divinity. He sees the world as God. He worships all beings as embodiments of God. Bhakti is based upon the knowledge of

Brahman, which pervades everywhere and which we have realised according to Sankhya.

Lastly comes the path of Tantra in which we worship Shakti, the divine power of the universe. We realise that one divine Power is active everywhere and we surrender ourselves to that Power and feel that we are doing everything by Shakti. She who activates everything in the world makes us also act. We know that in our body the working of the digestive system, the heart, breathing, blood circulation, growth of the hair, and other processes are going on without our knowledge and consciousness. Which is the power that causes all these? It is Shakti, the same power that makes the sun shine and the wind blow. It is only one and the same power that is active everywhere and manifests itself in various ways. If we recognise that this power is acting in us, there is no room for us to think that we are doing everything ourselves. Then the sense of actorship, which is very difficult to get over, will disappear. Still actions will be done by us. This is Karma Yoga.

THE BEAUTY OF SELFLESS WORK

Many people are under the impression that when the ego disappears we become useless to the world. That is not so. We continue to be active. The divine Power makes us active and the work we do will now have the stamp of universality, because it is not then the ego but the universal Power that makes us work. When we have put ourselves in the hands of Shakti, the universal Power, and become Her instruments, we live move and act in the world only for the service of humanity as prompted from time to time by the Divine. We have no more ambitions or desires for anything in the world because they have all been amply fulfilled by our realising the universal Spirit. We are fully contented. We give our love to all alike without expecting anything in return. Love simply flows out of us spontaneously, because our very nature becomes such that we cannot but equally love everybody. We are like the sun that gives light to all alike, without expecting anything in return. We behold ourselves everywhere. We are one with the supreme Spirit which is manifested as everything, including the power which is active everywhere,

THE GREAT MISTAKE

We now find that the ego never existed. God alone exists. This is the experience of the soul who has identified himself with God in all His aspects. He is called the Vibhuti, or the Avatar, or the embodiment of Divinity. When we say we have to surrender ourselves to the will of God, it means that the will of God must work through us. His power must work through us. We must submit ourselves to Him to such an extent that the ego must disappear. We must be conscious every minute that His power is active in us. This is resignation to the divine will. So long as the ego-sense is there, we think we are doing everything ourselves. This is the great mistake and that is why we are doing wrong. Ego-sense makes us do things with a narrow vision, the individual vision. By that we bind ourselves through our actions and try to bind others also, causing pain, misery and hardship to others. Outwardly, we might say we love them. Physical love is no good. It is a source of misery, both to the lover and the beloved. But spiritual love based upon the sense of oneness is sublime. You love another not because the other is a relation of yours but because you and he are one in Spirit.

Jesus' saying "Love thy neighbour as thyself" was based on this type of love. In this love the ego-sense is completely absent. Love fulfils itself by loving, by giving, and not by getting anything in return. Love itself is joy to you, action itself is joy to you. From bliss, bliss alone can come. In the ocean we see waves rising. Waves cannot but be water, nothing but water. It cannot be of any other substance. When you know the root of your existence is in God, whatever you feel, whatever you think, must be the waves of that existence whose nature is pure love and bliss. So we say that this cosmic manifestation is nothing but the moving, blissful expression of God, the basis of which is the still, calm and peaceful spirit of God that is also bliss.

In the Bhagavad Gita it is said that we are all like beads strung on one thread, because one *Antaryamin*, the one all-pervading indwelling Truth, is the basis of our manifest life. We are all expressions or embodiments of that one Spirit that dwells and pervades everywhere within us. The illustration is to show that within us all there is the one Spirit and we are all forms of that divine Spirit. In a rosary you find there is one thread passing through all the beads, connecting them up into one rosary. We see that the mutual connection, kinship and association of all the

beads is established through the recognition of the thread. The thread is the substratum. Similarly, all the manifestations in this universe are strung together on the thread of the Divine.

THE PATH OF SELF-ENQUIRY

When we have realised this, we know that the ego is only an impostor. Its existence is only imaginary. People say we must drive away the ego. We can do so only if the ego is there. But if it is not really there, whom are we to drive out? If we search for it, we do not find it anywhere. That is why *Atma Vichar* or self-inquiry is said to be one of the ways of realising God. This inquiry is to find out where this "I" exists. If we go deeper and deeper within in search of this "I", we come at last to know it does not exist at all. By this inquiry we become one with our real being, viz., God or Atman. There the search ends.

In India till recently there lived a great soul called Ramana Maharshi. To all who went to him and put questions, he would only say: "Try to find out who you are." When somebody goes and asks him, "I want to know something, may I ask you a question?", the Maharshi's reply invariably was, "Find out who that 'I' is who wants to know." So we have to find out who that "I" is. This enquiry will lead us to the conclusion that there is only one truth, one existence, and one God. Then we know that ourselves, God and the world are one. Now we are obsessed by the ego-sense to such an extent that we cannot free ourselves easily from its clutches. This freedom can be gained, the obsession removed, only by our identifying ourselves in meditation with the all-pervading Spirit.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches us to realise God in all His aspects, not merely as the impersonal truth, not merely as the personal, but also as the all-comprehensive, integral, supreme, transcendent being, the Purushottama, who is at once the impersonal and the personal, and also beyond both, in whom we find the eternal Witness representing the aspect of knowledge, the infinite Love, which is the aspect of the heart, and finally the omnipotent Power — the dynamic aspect — which is at work in all manifestations, causing creation, preservation and destruction. If we attain this highest realisation, then we are completely free from the clutches of the ego-sense.

God is the universal Spirit; He is the manifestation and He is also beyond everything. It is to this God that the surrender

has to be made. Saints provide the best example of childlike surrender. In this connection Ramdas remembers Ramakrishna Paramahansa. You might have heard of this great Avatar who recently came down to the earth for the uplift of humanity. He was as simple, guileless and innocent as a child. We must develop that nature, cultivate childlike cheerfulness and childlike innocence. There should be no calculative habit. We should be frank, cheerful and overflowing with love. Ramdas remembers also the words of another great saint of India who was asked to define God. He said: "God is the Eternal Child, playing an eternal game in the eternal garden." So God is a child and if we too become like children we are very near God. Jesus has rightly said: "Unless you become like children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

EXPERIENCES OF THE MAN OF SELF-SURRENDER

God takes His devotee and dissolves him into His all transcendent and all splendrous being. The person who has thus surrendered himself to God and feels His presence everywhere, does not see any difference between himself and others. Then how does he live? He is simple and innocent; his love goes to everybody. He is always happy. He takes every situation that comes to him as willed by the Divine. He has nobody to hate in the world; no condition can upset his mind. He is very cheerful and happy, whether he is having good things or bad things. He is not at all affected because he has no mind as such. If the mind is there, he will feel the reaction of the situation in which he is placed from time to time. But his mind is dissolved, merged in God. So in all situations he remains perfectly happy and peaceful. There is no loss or gain for him because he is not concerned with either. Whatever comes to him comes from God and whatever goes from him goes to God. It is just like taking something from one pocket and putting it into another. Both pockets are his. They are, in fact, God's pockets. He receives and He gives. So there is no sense of loss or gain. Praise and blame do not affect him. Honour and dishonour do not affect him. He remains ever calm as he has found the Reality within him and he has known that he is the embodiment of that Reality. He knows well that happiness and misery do not depend upon external conditions, the so-called favourable or the unfavourable. It is said that a man of the world is like a pendulum that moves between a tear and a

smile. He depends upon external things for his happiness. When people praise him he is elated. If they blame him he is depressed. But when he has found within himself the eternal source of all happiness — God — and is ever one with Him, he does not mind what the world says. In all situations he is perfectly cheerful. His love too will be flowing out spontaneously towards millions. He and the millions will merge together in the ocean of love. Love is a great purifier. It purifies our heart and it purifies the hearts of others also. We are elevated and raised to a higher plane in which all distinctions are lost.

We have come here after visiting quite a number of countries in Europe and America. Friends ask us how we felt in our journey. We have received everywhere great love. There is no reason for us to grumble. In all places friends have been very loving to us. If we have love in our hearts we get love in return, because God is everywhere and He is love. If a man sees God within himself, he sees God everywhere. If he says that he is God and not others, he has not known God at all, because that is not the right experience. If he has seen God within him, he must see everybody as the embodiment of God. His vision becomes so pure and glorious. Swami Ramatirtha, when he was in America, was once asked by a friend, "Who are you?" The Swamiji replied, "I am God, so are you!" He stood before large audiences and saw himself in the forms of the ladies and gentlemen in the audience. He beheld God everywhere.

Questions and Answers

Q: If you see God everywhere, why should you have to answer questions and teach others?

Ramdas: It is all only for the sake of play. To complete the play, you put some questions and he answers. In fact, you are all He.

THE CENTRE OF CAUSATION

Q: What is the centre of causation?

Ramdas: The centre of causation is the Divine Shakti. All the three kinds of movements we see in the universe are sprung from Her. Beyond the Divine Shakti is the causeless Reality — the Shakta — and in the bosom of that Reality She is playing the game of creation, preservation and destruction. So

we can take it that the centre is in Shakti. There is no causation beyond Her, because that Spirit beyond, the Shakta, is perfectly still and calm. He is the eternal witness of the universal play. He is not the doer. A person who has realised both the Shakti and the Shākta aspects, when he acts, he actually acts and acts not. Because as the universal Spirit or Shakta, he is inactive, static, and does not do anything. But as the body and the senses which are the manifestations of Shakti, the divine power, he is doing everything. So Yogis are said to be acting and not acting at the same time. •

Q: What about the law of compensation?

Ramdas: The Hindu scriptures speak of the law of Karma. As you sow, so shall you reap. If you do good, you will reap good fruits. If you do bad, you will have to reap bad fruits. This is called the law of Karma, what you call the law of compensation. It is true even here and now. We need not go to the past life to prove this. If we do evil we get punished for it without much delay, very often. So we know that if we do good, we shall reap good, and vice versa. We should learn to do good always. By doing good we approach God and realise Him. He can be realised only by one who is pure in heart. When a man is pure in heart he will never do any evil causing harm to others. He will be kind and compassionate. He will be ever willing to serve others without accepting or without even expecting any reward.

Q: Is there no difference between a Christian who has surrendered himself to Christ within and a Hindu who has surrendered himself to the Spirit within?

Ramdas: Absolutely no difference. Here the Spirit and Christ are one. Christ is a consciousness, not merely a person. He is an incarnation who came for the redemption of mankind. He is worshipped. He could do the work of redemption as he knew he was the impersonal universal Spirit. This experience enabled him to appear on the earth for the redemption of mankind. Otherwise it would not have been possible for him. The Hindu who surrenders himself to the Spirit gets the same beatitude as the Christian who surrenders himself to Christ within him.

Q: What is meant by Truth?

Ramdas: Truth means God. Ramdas has not used the word as the opposite to the word 'lie'. He means the Truth within, that which ever exists. It has no beginning or end. It is eternal. God alone is eternal. So Truth is God.

Q: How can we recognise the Truth?

Ramdas: By realising or by believing in the words of those who have realised. Actual recognition comes only when we see God. First we must have faith in Him, and then try to see Him. If we follow the teachings of great sages who have walked on the path and realised Him, we shall also be able to realise Him.

Q: How long did it take Ramdas to know God?

Ramdas. About two years. For the two years there was a tremendous hunger in his heart for God. He was burning with the hunger and the fire that was in him destroyed everything that ought not be in his heart, and made his heart perfectly pure. That is, in that fire all the lower desires and clinging to worldly things were burnt.

EVIL IS AN OBSESSION

Q: How can we really not see evil?

Ramdas: He who has got universal love in his heart sees no evil at all in the world. When all the evils are removed from our heart, we can see only goodness everywhere. Some saints, even when they were persecuted, never considered that persecution as anything bad. They accepted it only as the favour or grace of God. There was a saint in India who lived over hundred years ago during the Indian mutiny when there was a lot of killing. An European soldier stabbed him. He fell down and before he breathed his last, he said looking at the soldier: "You are He!" He did not see any evil in the person who murdered him. When he saw God in him, how could he see evil? What a wonderful vision it was! Swami Vivekananda was never tired of telling this story to emphasise the greatness of the vision which great saints had attained in India. This is much more than forgiveness. We can forgive another only when his fault is recognised. In this case there is no fault at all seen. Then where is the question of forgiveness? Evil is not a reality, but it is an obsession. It has come with the ego. It will disappear along with the ego. Universal love is the reality, for universal love is God and God is the reality. Evil somehow appears. Why it appears is a mystery. We know, however, it can be got rid of by the grace of God, by our complete surrender to Him.

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

Q: What is the future of the world?

Ramdas: Ramdas is an optimist. He sees always good ahead of us. All people shall love each other, live in harmony and make a heaven of this earth. This vision is always before Ramdas in which all human beings are spiritually realised souls. The world is controlled by God and He is so good and so merciful that He will not fail to bring about this most desirable consummation.

Q: If all are God and we are one with all, why do we think we are different?

Ramdas: It is all the play of the Divine, putting on the mask of ignorance. We want to be one with all and we want to know the technique by which we can dissolve this ego-sense and realise our oneness with everybody. But we fail to do so when we dislike anybody. Later on, we realise that we have not done the right thing and so we repent. We are obsessed by something which is keeping us away from that realisation of oneness. It is all part of His mysterious play.

Q: Are Christ and Buddha different?

Ramdas: They are one and the same, although they have two names and two forms. The two forms and two names are of the one Truth. Those who want to be guided by Buddha can have inspiration from him and those who want to be guided by Christ can have inspiration from Christ. In both cases the inspiration they get is from the same universal Spirit whose embodiments both of them are.

WITH THE INDIAN STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF SEATTLE
24th October, 1954.

A Student: Swamiji, please tell us about your mission and your tour.

Ramdas: We left India on a mission of universal love and service. Universal love and service can be practised only by realising the unity of humanity as a whole. We must think always in terms of the universal Spirit. Although we belong to different countries, we actually belong to one human race. We have to develop this consciousness so that we can live in harmony and peace with one another, to whatever country or nationality we may belong. This unity can be realised only when we know that there is one all-pervading Spirit, God, dwelling in the hearts of everyone of us. The recognition of this truth and the realisation of this Spirit will enable us to live in absolute harmony.

We now find that we have provincial, national and racial differences which keep us apart. This is because we think in terms of nationality and community. We must think in terms of humanity, in terms of the spirit that pervades humanity, as we all belong to one human race. Then we shall have a much wider vision; our outlook will expand and we can embrace the whole world as ours and all the inhabitants of the world as belonging to one world-brotherhood. We have all sprung from the same source. God is our divine parent and we are all His children. As such, the difference between us, which is causing so much strife, should be done away with. The conflict is not outside, but within us. It is the inner conflict that gives rise to the external conflict. So if we tune ourselves with the universal Spirit which we call God and which we call also by so many other names, then alone we can love each other and live in perfect amity, friendship and harmony.

It is with a view to propagate this ideal and awaken this consciousness in the world that this child of God is going from place to place. It is not merely by preaching or teaching that he tries to spread this ideal, but also by living with others in a spirit of perfect friendship, perfect harmony and love based upon the spiritual kinship of all people. He has come here after visiting many places in Europe. He spent a fortnight in England and then came to New York. After visiting St. Paul, we are now

here on our way to St. Francisco and Los Angeles. From there we will go back to India, via Japan and Hong Kong.

Ramdas can tell you that it is not by his own plan that he is going about like this. He is incapable of undertaking such a tour by himself unless God willed that he should do so and God provided him with all the necessary facilities for the journey. He is only a child of God. God as father and mother has been sponsoring this tour and he has been able to go from place to place meeting friends everywhere who were all love and kindness to Ramdas and his party. We are going to Japan, where also we are bound to meet some friends. It is rightly said that if you have developed a friendly spirit, you will meet friends everywhere. There is also a saying that if God becomes your friend, all human beings will become your friends, even wild animals. So if we develop friendship with all human beings in the world, how happy we shall be!

That is why we are asked to dive deep within and find the universal Spirit and realise our unity with the Spirit as well as with the whole manifestation. Then we attain true happiness and live with our fellow beings in perfect friendliness and perfect love. From that love proceeds real service. Human life is a precious thing because we are gifted with the power of understanding and of serving others. We have to utilise our life for that purpose. It is not to be spent for selfish ends. We must use these powers and what we acquire by such powers for the benefit of others. You are all young men studying various sciences and arts. You will make use of them in the right way when you return to India. You must keep this in mind. Your life is intended not to be used for your own sake, but for the sake of others around you. You have to serve the nation and through the nation you have to serve the whole universe. This is possible only when you become selfless within. When you become selfless, you can give peace and happiness to all who come in contact with you. The more and more selfish you become, the more and more unhappy you will be. To be happy you must give yourself away for the good of all. Whatever power you have must be laid at the service of humanity as a whole. When you get proficiency in the several branches of science you are learning, you will all go back to India to serve in your respective departments so that India may rise to the same status as other nations of the world.

INDIA'S MISSION IN THE WORLD

India's mission is to serve the world, to enlighten the world, because India has got a heritage which is so glorious. Our saints and sages, the great spiritual Masters and leaders, are there to lead the world. India had fallen once, but she has now risen even materially and politically. When she rises fully to that height which other nations have reached, you will see that India will stand out first in the world not only on the spiritual plane, but on the material plane also. When your mind is in tune with God you are happy, because God is happiness. It is not wealth that gives happiness. There is plenty of wealth in America, but people here are not happy. By recognising the Spirit within you and tuning your mind with that Spirit, you can be happy and can impart that happiness to others by serving them, even giving your life to them when necessary. We see many countries materially elevated and raised, but they do not seem to be happy because they have not found the true source of happiness within themselves. They have not found God within them.

God stands for absolute peace and bliss. When we find within ourselves the eternal source of bliss, our life becomes blessed. Otherwise we shall be running after transitory objects, ignoring the truth or substance of life. We shall be leaving the substance in pursuit of the shadow. We should not depend upon the external things for our happiness, for happiness is within us. We must earn money, possess money, acquire things and objects, not only for our own comforts but to be of help to all our fellow beings and to humanity. India, you know, is full of poverty. Ramdas has been going all over India for the past several years. He has travelled from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas and from East Bengal to Sind. He has found so much misery and unhappiness in the land. You must bear in mind that young men like you, when you go back to India fully qualified, should devote yourselves selflessly for the work of the nation. You must struggle hard to do away with the poverty of India and raise her to the same status in which you find other countries. You see in America people have plenty and they live with all comforts. So also India must be made materially strong. At the same time our spiritual heritage must not be left in the background. It must be made equally strong. It means that we must be materially and spiritually strong. This is possible when we learn to love everybody by expanding our vision. We must develop universal

vision, that is, our outlook must not be confined only to India. It must spread from India to all over the world. For Indians this is easy, because from childhood they are brought up in an atmosphere where there is faith and belief in God, and everybody around them has a devotional nature at heart.

Questions and Answers

Q: Do you think Americans are less happy because they lack spiritual advancement?*

Ramdas: Those who are thinking of God are always happy. In that sense Americans are less happy. Even in India, those who do not think of God are not happy. Ramdas has seen kings and millionaires in India. They themselves admitted that they were very unhappy in spite of all their riches. Here also people are very rich, but they come to Ramdas and say they are not happy. Then where is happiness? It is not in possessing wealth and material comforts; with all these, our mind is still restless and discontented. We want ever more and more. So it is clear these things do not contribute to our happiness. This has been the experience of many. You must have heard the saying: "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." Happy is he whose mind is in tune with the Divine. We are mistaken in our belief that by acquiring wealth we can be happy. Americans have plenty of wealth and material comforts no doubt, but they are not happy because happiness is elsewhere.

Q: If everybody follows your teaching, everybody will have to wander like you. Is it not?

Ramdas: Not necessarily. Ramdas is going round the world only to tell you all about universal love and service. You can lead the real life wherever you are and in whatever profession you may be engaged.

Q: Is happiness alone the goal of life?

Ramdas: Yes, that is what we are all striving for. Even from the ant upwards to the human being, all are striving for happiness. But they do not get the happiness they seek. If you go and ask anybody if he is happy, he will say he is not. If he is at all happy, it may be only for a few seconds or minutes of his life. Again another wave of sorrow comes and he is miserable.

Q: What will be the world like when everybody is happy?

Ramdas: That is what we all really want. There will be nothing but happiness everywhere. Everybody will have shed selfishness and will work for the good of others, contributing what he has for the welfare of others, instead of each one working and toiling for his own sake.

AT THE RESIDENCE OF YOGACHARYA MILDRED HAMILTON,
SEATTLE

24th October, 1954.

THE SPIRITUAL MASTER

Beloved Friends—You all know what it is to be in touch with a spiritual Master. Many of you must have met such a Master, basked in the sunshine of his grace, received his influence and got your heart illumined with the light and presence of God. It is not only the inner longing for the supreme Beloved of your heart that you should have, but also the contact of a God-realised soul, spiritually illumined and spiritually perfected.

It is said by a great saint of India that the contact of a saint is the most essential thing for one who is longing for God. In fact, God leads such a struggling soul to a saint, because direct contact with the universal Spirit is not possible. You cannot have a relationship with God as you can with the personification of His spirit. Such a personification is the spiritual Master. Saints are the very embodiments or expressions of God. If you believe in them and look upon them as such, you can derive from their contact unlimited strength for your spiritual advancement. The mind is a very difficult thing to control. Although you keenly wish that the mind should always contemplate on God and think of Him constantly, it does not do so. You then require the help of a saint. This invaluable help a saint alone can give you. If you look upon him as your sole spiritual guide, his light and grace will fall on you and your heart will be freed from all impurities.

SUPERIOR TO PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

It is said that a saint makes you like himself. Saints are often compared to the philosopher's stone which, by its mere contact, turns any base metal into gold. But a saint is superior, for by his contact he makes you like himself. He fills you with divine radiance and joy. He awakens you to the awareness of the Spirit within you and your mind thereafter will be always in divine peace. All your desires of the senses will leave you completely and you are filled with childlike innocence, purity and love. You become the veritable expression of the Divine. This is the goal to which the spiritual Master's guidance leads you. Ramdas can

tell you from his own experience that he has become what he is by the blessings and grace of saints. Had saints not come to his help, he would have been still striving and searching to find God. But since saints' grace came to him, his doubts ceased and he began to feel the presence of God within. God took him to Himself, absorbing him into His transcendent all-pervading and eternal Being.

We must keep the doors of our heart open to receive the influence when we approach saints. Then alone we can receive abundantly from them. Very few know the greatness of saints and spiritual Masters. Even when they come to us and teach us and give us the benefit of their company, we do not understand them. This is true everywhere, not merely in the Western countries but also in the Eastern countries. Very few understand saints or take advantage of their help and grace. Their hearts are always flowing out with love, compassion and mercy towards those who come to them, and those who are open to receive the Grace are saved.

A SAINT TRANSFORMS BY THOUGHT, SIGHT AND TOUCH

It is said that saints transmit their powers in three ways: by thought, sight and touch. If a saint thinks of a person, even though he is far away, that person is illumined; if he looks at a person, his entire being is shaken to its very foundation, a new consciousness dawns in him, and he finds himself a different person from that moment; if the saint touches a person, he feels a tremendous change taking place in him. In that thought, look as well as touch, there is so much love and compassion for the uplift, advancement and illumination of the aspirant. The mind that seeks peace gets it in the presence of a saint by his grace. It is a peace that passeth all understanding. Man thinks that by his effort he will be able to attain God. This is entirely foolish. When we have struggled long, we come to know that we cannot realise Him by our effort. Then, in all humility we surrender to the Master, and his grace flows into us. A humble heart alone can receive grace, not a proud one. Meekness is a necessary condition.

Thus the spiritual Master brings about the inner awakening of the aspirant who goes to him seeking peace, freedom and joy. Based on this inner awakening of the Divine, true love dawns in his heart. Then he will love all beings and creatures, because he sees God everywhere. The whole world now stands transformed

as the very image of his Beloved. He sees and loves his Beloved in everybody.

All this happens through the grace of the Master. Anybody, whether good or bad, who comes to him can get his grace. He is like a lamp that gives light to anybody who is near it. The lamp does not make any distinction as to whether those who go near it are good or bad. It gives light to everyone equally. So does the spiritual Master. That is why it is said the Master has equal vision. When people of different temperaments and nature approach him, all of them are blessed with his light and grace. If the Master discriminates between the good and bad, where is the hope then for the fallen soul? The purpose for which the spiritual Master comes to the world is to save the fallen, to raise those who are living in a lower level, miserable and unhappy. The touch of a saint gives them a new birth, a new consciousness dawns on them. They feel happy, courageous and strong because they feel the presence of the Master with them.

The spiritual Master never dies. He is not an ordinary person who dies and disappears from our life. When you once depend upon him he is always there at your back to help you and guide you. If he takes you up once, you can always depend upon him, for you are always under his shelter. He will not leave you until he raises you to his status completely. As soon as Ramdas met a saint he felt that very moment the Master took his seat in his heart. His little self disappeared completely as he was possessed by the Master. He was free from temptations as his mind was made pure and desireless. By the Master's grace he could see the Beloved on the face of everybody. He was feeling every moment the presence of the Divine.

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE

In his wandering days a certain Sadhu once came and asked Ramdas to follow him. In those days Ramdas implicitly obeyed whatever others told him, for he knew it was God alone who was telling him in the form of others. So Ramdas kept company with the Sadhu and did whatever the latter asked him to do. He felt secure like a child in the hands of its mother. The Sadhu suggested one day that we should go to a solitary spot. Ramdas went with him. We sat together on a raised pedestal built round a huge tree in the thick of a forest. He decided that we should spend that night there. Ramdas, as usual, was going on chanting the

Divine name. He had no sleep in those days, He got absorbed in the Name and sat for hours together without feeling the least inclination to sleep.

When Ramdas was in that mood, the Sadhu asked him: "Do you know who I am?"

In reply Ramdas asked: "Why do you ask the question? Ramdas knows you are He, his Beloved."

The Sadhu: "I am not the Beloved. I am not so mild as you think. I belong to the class of corpse-eaters. So you have to take care of what I might do to you."

It was dead of night in a lonely place. Ramdas smiled and said, "Oh Ram! You may put on any mask, but Ramdas is not going to be afraid of you."

Sometimes mothers try to frighten children by putting on some cloth over their head, hiding their face, and pretending to be something different. But the child knows that it is its mother, though she has put on a mask, and it is not afraid at all. The child removes the mask of the mother and laughs saying: "You are my mother!" Similarly, on this occasion Ramdas was not at all afraid because of the mask his beloved Ram had put on, trying to frighten Ramdas. Hearing Ramdas' reply, the Sadhu simply smiled. He did not talk any more of corpse-eating. On the other hand, he was all love and kindness to Ramdas.

AT HOME EVERYWHERE

Ramdas knew that when his mind was fixed on God he had nothing to be afraid of and no temptations or threats of any kind would affect him. He could freely roam about in the forest and other places haunted by wild animals. They did him no harm. All this courage was given to him by the Master. Ramdas was ever cheerful. He had no reason to be unhappy, worried or anxious about anything. Life to him is all joy and nothing but joy. When he sits before you he feels as happy and cheerful as he is in the Ashram. He does not see any difference between this place and that, or any other place. He is familiar with everything that he sees. He does not feel that he has come to a new place. Every place is familiar as he feels one with all surroundings. This is all due to divine grace, poured into him through the spiritual Master. All glory to him!

THE MARKS OF BLESSEDNESS

There was once a devotee in the Ashram who was a disciple of a great Sufi saint. He told Ramdas one day: "Papa, shall I tell you how we can sort out people who have found a Master from those who have not found one? It is very easy. Look at their faces. The faces of those who have found a Master will be dripping joy. There will be a strange light in them." This devotee could distinguish them easily from others. If anybody came to the Ashram he would immediately say whether or not that person had found a Master. There is light and joy shining on the face of such persons. You can make it out very easily. They are happy and blissful, because they have found the shelter under which they are perpetually secure. If not today, tomorrow they are sure to reach the goal. The difference is visible on the face, which shows a strange calmness and serenity. There may be slight turmoils going on within them as it is difficult to fix the mind always on God. There may be falls now and again. But the impression on the inner consciousness due to the grace of the Master will shine on their faces. Those who have not found their Master and who have not done spiritual practices like prayer or meditation, generally live in the lower nature. There is fear on the face of such persons. They are not happy. Sometimes they put on some assumed joy, but we can make out it is not real. The joy and smile to be real must come from the heart which is in tune with God. It is the inner joy that reveals itself in smiles and laughs.

THE THREE GREAT MASTERS

Some people say that a spiritual Master is not necessary for one's progress. They also go on preaching about it. They ask others not to have any spiritual Master. But they themselves become spiritual Masters. They do not want anybody to hang on to any external peg, but at the same time hundreds of people look up to them for guidance and seek to follow them. They thus become pegs in their turn for others to hang on. Buddha condemned idol worship, but he himself was made later on an image of worship. That is the way of human nature. You must have some spiritual Master to guide you. After some time when God has revealed Himself in your heart fully, no external help is necessary. But till you get that foothold, till you realise His

presence within, His guidance and inspiration from outside is necessary. Ramdas had not only contact with many saints but he used also to draw great inspiration from them.

The three great Masters: Krishna, Buddha, and Christ, inspired Ramdas not to a small extent. If his mind was a little wavering, the very thought of Buddha made it serene. All these three were so very gracious to him that they gave him their vision. He saw Buddha, he saw Krishna and he saw also Christ. When he thinks of these visions his body thrills with joy. It was a wonderful experience. But he did not hang on to these visions as his ambition was to rise beyond all these forms and fix himself on the all-pervading, impersonal aspect of God. When Krishna's figure stood before him, Ramdas said: "Oh Lord, Ramdas is not after this Darshan. He wants the universal Vision of which You have spoken so much in the Bhagavad Gita. You have said the whole universe is Your image. Ramdas will not be satisfied with anything short of that." Ramdas wanted to be ever in a state of Sahaja Samadhi, which is a state of trance in which one is always conscious of God within and without. This comes after the realisation of God in all His aspects.

SAHAJA SAMADHI

There are various kinds of spiritual experiences. There is a kind of trance in which one sits silent forgetting his body. But the best realisation is that which is always with you, and this is called Sahaja Samadhi. You feel the presence of God every-second; even when you are talking, walking or doing anything. When you attain this experience, all your spiritual discipline has come to an end. You live a simple and spontaneous life ever conscious of God, ever feeling His presence with you and everywhere about you. You live, move and have your being in Him. You are He in His entirety, in all His aspects. You do not exert to have a particular consciousness and try to maintain it. If you have to do so, and if your practice becomes slack, you feel you have fallen. There is no rise and fall in Sahaja Samadhi, unlike one who raises himself in meditation and falls down when he stops it.

This realisation is not maintained by any spiritual discipline. In Sahaja Samadhi there is no high and low, there is no going up or coming down. The conception of high and low disappears completely because you are in that state of divine consciousness

from which there is no rise or fall. It is simply there and you are That. Then you cannot but be pure, as you live in that state always. Where is the question of a lower life, or the so-called material life, or sense life? Where is the question of craving for things? The senses have become divine and the objects too have become divine. Every movement has become divine. Every feeling and thought has become divine. You are totally divine in all your movements, internal and external. You become the embodiment of bliss and joy.

REGAIN YOUR LOST CHILDHOOD

God is Sat-Chit-Ananda; eternal existence, consciousness, bliss. You realise that you are That. You are the very mould and expression of that Spirit, and you realise the worlds are not different from you. If you feel anything as different from you, you may desire and wish to have it. But when you are one with the universal Spirit and there is but that alone everywhere, where is the question of your desiring anything? You live a natural childlike life. That is the divine childhood.

You have already passed through the childhood when you were very young, but you grew up to be wise. But is it true growth? No, you have grown the other way. The innocence of childhood is gone, the freedom is gone, and you are caught in the tyranny of time and space. The mind has begun to worry about so many things. So, you must regain the joy and freedom of childhood. Adam and Eve were originally children, but they lost their childhood and innocence. The paradise was lost. The paradise lost by Adam was regained by Christ. Christ was a child of God. This divine childhood has no change, as it is established in the Spirit within. All spiritual Masters are such children. Ramdas remembers the saints he met. They were quite childlike. Once he went to see a sage of 70 or 75 years old. Ramdas sat near him, listened to him and watched his ways. In all his behaviour he was just like a child. He lovingly talked to all who came to him, and laughed with them.

AT THE UNIVERSITY UNITARIAN CHURCH, SEATTLE,
24th October, 1954.

DIVINE LOVE AND SERVICE

Dear friends, — The subject for today's talk is 'Divine Love and Service'. You know the aim of human life is to realise God, to see Him and to experience Him in all ways of life. You know also that the true aspirant and seeker of God should see that his active life is compatible with this supreme aspiration. Very often we pray to God and perform many devotional practices but do not see appreciable results. This is because our external life is not adjusted to this great ideal. As long as we are worldly, our minds remain impure, our hearts are always agitated, and the Divine is far away from us. The light of the Divine dawns in us only when the heart is pure, and the heart can be pure only when our actions are done for the good and welfare of others. In other words, all that we do should co-ordinate with and help our supreme aspiration. Unless we give ourselves away in service to all those who are suffering, we cannot expand our vision and make our prayers and meditation fruitful.

We pray to God, we take His name, we meditate upon Him. But if we do not, side by side, practise also forgiveness, kindness and compassion towards our fellow beings, we shall not be able to approach God, we shall never be fit to receive His grace. The best way to make our actions acceptable to God is by making them selfless. We must do actions in a spirit of complete surrender to the divine will, feeling that it is by His prompting and by His inspiration that we are acting. In such actions themselves we must find joy and peace, without caring for the fruits. Our heart must melt at the sight of suffering. We must be strictly moral in all that we do. We must be honest, straightforward and truthful. As we practise such discipline, our minds get purified and our prayers become fruitful. Then it is that our vision is widened, and in meditation our heart is opened to God who is the all-pervading Spirit. We then begin to feel the presence of God within us and we merge ourselves in Him, as the inner Truth and also as the outer life or expression of His universal existence. By living in accordance with this ideal, the purpose of our birth as human beings is fulfilled.

THE BASIS OF UNIVERSAL LOVE

God is universal. He is the God of all people on earth. There is no such thing as a God of one religion and a God of another, a God of one country and a God of another. We have made such distinctions through our ignorance. When we know the truth we find we are all children of the one divine Parent who dwells in our hearts. On the basis of this knowledge we can really love one another. If we really love our fellow beings, we love God who resides in the hearts of all. By such love we destroy our low desires and passions which make us fight with each other. To be free from this evil of war, the only remedy is love.

Love is universal. Human love emanates from the individual's physical relation with others, but divine love emanates from our knowledge of the eternal Spirit within us. We must abide by the inspiration which we get by our contact or communion with this eternal Spirit. Then our life will flow out spontaneously to all in a spirit of love. The deluge of love that outpours from our heart will inundate everywhere. Our heart will then embrace the whole universe out of the fullness of love. When we can have the privilege of saying that the whole world is our family, why should we narrow down our outlook and call only a few as belonging to us, considering the rest as different from us? If we have this sense of separation, we are far away from God. We should love our neighbours as we love ourselves.

Everybody can feel God's presence, because He is ever with us. He walks with us, talks to us and does everything necessary for us in a mysterious way. So God is a reality. Ramdas can say with great emphasis that at every moment of his life he feels Him, he knows Him, he has Him always with him. God who is dwelling in the hearts of all must be so dear to us.

Many of you must be already feeling like Ramdas. You may be conscious of God when you are in prayer or meditation. When you know Him, your heart will be full of love and devotion. You always feel that He is with you. Some of you may even see Him in the form in which you want to see Him. Many have seen God in the forms in which they have been adoring Him.

Questions and Answers

Q: What is being done in India to deal with the traditional caste system and what is the origin of it?

Ramdas: The caste system had its origin perhaps in the division of labour long long ago. Some such division exists all over the world. Among yourselves some may belong to the merchant class, some may be soldiers, some servants, while a few may be highly educated. In India also the caste system was originally created like that. But later on the spirit underlying the division deteriorated and people began to look upon some as superior and others as inferior. Caste became watertight compartments and there arose mutual jealousies and rivalries between the different divisions. But the evil is gradually disappearing now. Mahatma Gandhi has done a great deal to demolish these caste boundaries. We feel now that we are all one, to whatever caste we may belong.

Q: Are you a follower of Gandhi?

Ramdas: Ramdas is a follower of God, but he has great admiration for Gandhiji. He has derived inspiration from Gandhiji's teachings as he did from all the great teachers like Buddha, Christ, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi. All these great saints gave him great help in his spiritual seeking.

Q: I would like to know a little more about Hindu religion that makes it important to people of India to follow it.

Ramdas: The Hindu religion is the universal religion. It accepts all the great Teachers and spiritual Masters of the world as equally great, because they are all representations or manifestations of the Divine. The Hindus offer equal reverence to Jesus, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Buddha, Krishna or Rama. These are the great Teachers of the world. Hinduism is not an exclusive religion as many other religions are, which claim that people can attain salvation only if they follow their particular Master. But this is not the claim of Hinduism. It says: "All religions are true. You may follow any religion you like. But be sincere and look upon the Master, the supreme personality of your religion, as the very expression of Divinity, even as the Masters of other religions are. By having complete faith in your Master you will be saved, whether it be Buddha, Krishna, Jesus or Mohammed." This is the thing you find peculiar in Hinduism.

WITH THE STUDENTS IN THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY,
STANFORD,

26th October, 1954.

HOW RAMNAM TAKES ONE TO GOD

Q: How does the constant repetition of Ramnam contribute to spirituality? Can you give us an example? We have noticed from "*The Vision*" that the counting of Japa is going on in the Ashram. Why should the Japa be counted? Does the counting not help to bloat the ego?

Ramdas: The ego will get bloated and will burst. There will be nothing left. It is true even when you repeat it yourself you may have the pride that you have chanted so many times and therefore you are superior to somebody who has done less. That is the infirmity of noble souls.

The consciousness that you are progressing on the divine path and that you are more in advance of others itself gives rise to the ego-sense. That is why it is said, when you take God's name you must do so in all humility and even go to the length of thinking that it is God who makes you chant the Name and not you. This is the secret of taking God's name. In that spirit it was that Ramdas chanted the Name. He never felt he was repeating it by his own initiative. He was conscious that it was by God's will and command. Then he found the Name could purify him through and through and make him fit to see God within and without.

Now the question is about the significance of the repetition of Ram Mantra and how it helps us in realising God. Ramnam stands for God. When you repeat God's name constantly your mind will be filled with the thought of God and in course of time you will become God. As you think, so you become. If you constantly think of Him your mind will be merged in Him. So when you repeat Ramnam, which stands for God, you have got God always in your thought and on your tongue. Gradually you will find that your mind which is so restless becomes calm and serene. The Name will automatically stop and you will have the super-conscious experience, when you realise God within you and everywhere outside you.

You must have heard of the biblical saying, "Be still and know I am God." The mind must be perfectly still. So long as

the mind is wandering, restless and agitated, you cannot feel the presence of God. In the disturbed waters you cannot see the reflection of your face, but when it is still you see clearly your face reflected. When your mind is still the light of God shines on you and you become conscious of the existence of God within you. Thereafter you live and have your being in the presence of God. So Ramnam stands for God and takes you to God.

Q: Do you feel you are always united with God even when you are living a normal life?

Ramdas: Yes. Ramdas is always united with God. One who has realised God may do things like others, but he is illumined within. His inner experience is reflected in his external life in so far as he loves everybody alike, is self-sacrificing, forgiving, kind and always cheerful. This is the nature of a person who has realised God. So if you are in close contact with him, you will know that he has got the higher consciousness in which he has realised the oneness or unity with God, even when he is busy with many activities in the world.

TWO KINDS OF SMILE

Q: We are living in a country which says, "Keep smiling". It does not produce any inward result or value. So we have become somehow critical of all artificial efforts to keep smiling.

Ramdas: There are two kinds of smiles, genuine and artificial. Very often we put on smiles, but the heart does not smile, only the lips and the face take part in it. This is not real smile. When the heart is filled with joy, it is reflected on the face as a smile. It is a natural outflow of joy. Such a smile is genuine and very healing. If you give such a smile to a man who is full of sorrow, it will be powerful enough to release him from that sorrow.

Q: Only if your smile comes out of your heart.

Ramdas: Yes. Only if the smile comes out of your heart, out of your love for that person. On many occasions Ramdas had met people afflicted with deep sorrow and they were healed to a great extent by his smiles and soothing words. If you have nothing to give, give at least a smile, a genuine smile. That costs you nothing, but it heartens the other person, infuses in him courage and strength and drives away all sorrow.

RENUNCIATION IS INTERNAL

Q: Can a person who is living in the society of so many things that distract and who is depending on so many things, renounce the world and become a Das of Ram?

Ramdas: It is not given to everybody to renounce the world and go away. Ramdas renounced according to Ram's will. But everybody has to spend sometime, say 10 to 15 minutes, before retiring to bed, for sitting silently, thinking of God and praying to Him to give the right guidance all through his daily activities. Your heart should be kept pure and your actions must be such as would be helpful to others. That is the way how you have to get on. Sudden renunciation is no good for everybody. That is not the way for all. Renunciation must first be internal. In India there are thousands of Sannyasis who have renounced and are going about from place to place. But they have not inwardly renounced the desire for external things. That is not renunciation. It must be internal.

When your heart is full of God, naturally there is no other thought in it. That is renunciation—to have no desire for anything in the world. Just as a great pond beside a river can be filled by opening a channel between the two, so also when you unite your mind with God, His power, love and grace will pour into you, and your mind will be full of joy, free from all desires. That joy fills you through and through from within.

The river of God with which you have to connect yourself is not without. It is within you. You have only to open the channel and you are flooded with joy. We desire for material things only because we have no contentment. We know by experience that we will not be happy by getting external things. They are followed by pain and worry. But this joy you get by communing with God is perennial. There is no break in it. It is based upon the immortal Truth within you and not on the perishable objects outside you. Perishable objects cannot give you imperishable joy. The imperishable alone can give you eternal joy and that imperishable being is God.

RENUNCIATION AND WORK

Q: Does the man who renounces the world and all the desires, still have the wish to work for the people?

Ramdas: He becomes the servant of God and his body thereafter lives only in the service of God. His activities are a spontaneous outflow of the energy of the Divine. He knows he is doing everything by the will and power of God. He never feels he is doing any good to the world. He simply does things as prompted by God and they go for the relief of the world. There are various kinds of distress in the world relating to the body and mind. Many come to Ramdas saying that they have no sleep or rest for the mind which is always agitated, and many others want things for the maintenance of the body. When such people come, our Ashram in India tries to cater to all their needs.

Q: Do you believe in attaining union with God by concentration on Him or by just chanting His name?

Ramdas: Chanting His name is done to achieve concentration.

Q: What about the ascetics hurting their own body by austerities?

Ramdas: It is not advisable. Ramdas does not believe in such self-mortification. By doing so, you cannot achieve anything.

SIGNS OF GOD REALISATION

Q: How does one know he has reached union with God?

Ramdas: If one watches one's thoughts and actions, one can very easily find it. The thoughts of a person who has realised God will never be selfish. He will be incapable of doing anything expecting any return for what he does. He will be perfectly selfless. His life will be like an oblation at the altar of God's service. He will never feel he owns anything. He will not have the sense of possession because he will be absorbed in the Self, immersed in bliss and peace.

Q: Is there not a more direct and more certain sign of one's union with God?

Ramdas: From outside it is difficult to make out whether a person has united himself with God or not. The man who has got that experience alone knows about it. Even if he says he has attained God, it cannot be believed by others, and people do not believe those who merely assert that they have attained God. It is said, the taste of the pudding lies in the eating. You have to eat before you know the taste of it. Realisation of God is self-evident. It shines by its own light.

Q: How does one find out what God's will is?

Ramdas: There are so many people who think they are guided by God, whereas they are not; for we can see that the actions they perform are selfish. If they are prompted by God, their actions cannot be selfish. From the nature of the actions and the motive at the back of them, they can at once find out for themselves, whether they are inspired by God or by their own ego.

THREE KINDS OF MIND

Q: The difficulty is that we are never feeling that we are inspired by divine forces or by selfish desires.

Ramdas: That is the stage when we are still on the path. We are dragged in all directions, by our lower nature and also by our higher nature. Sometimes we are in a higher plane and sometimes we fall down to a lower plane. Sometimes we have holy thoughts and sometimes very low and most undesirable thoughts. There is a constant tug of war as it were. In that state it is better we pray to God to take us to a higher consciousness and free us from the clutches of the lower nature.

There are three kinds of minds. One is like a mudworm, the other like a house-fly and the last like a bee. The mudworm dwells always in mud and enjoys its life. Suppose you see a mudworm rolling in filth and out of compassion for it you take it and place it on a clean spot. It won't be happy there. It will die soon unless you put it back in filth. The house-fly sits on sweet and fragrant things and also on filth. It enjoys both. It is with the sweet for sometime and then goes from there to remain in filth. The honey-bee sits only on flower and sucks honey. It will never sit on filth. So the mind that you are speaking about is like a house-fly. Our mind must be like the honey-bee, always finding delight only in the thought of God.

Q: How do you find India's awakening to technology affecting spiritual life?

Ramdas: It should not affect. We must progress materially and spiritually side by side. That is the true development we expect will take place in India and all over the world. Material progress should not be at the expense of spiritual advancement. They must go hand in hand. Then we have the integral evolution.

THE LILA OF GOD

Q: Will Ramdas explain the Lila of Ram?

Ramdas: That is what he sees going on everywhere. You are all He, in various forms. The whole universe is He. It is the one power that makes everything active. Lila is just like the drama we witness in which various characters come, play their parts and depart. You do not have any like or dislike for those parts. You watch them merely as play. Even when one plays the part of a thief well, you appreciate him! So also you must be a witness of the universal manifestation and see all the activities going on in the world as in a Divine drama, all beings playing their different parts which God has given them. Being a detached witness, you remain above the pairs of opposites such as likes and dislikes, and are always peaceful within, playing the part allotted to you in it. You are the witness of the Lila, or play of God, everywhere and you are at the same time the witnessed, i. e., you are the player as well as the seer of the play. You witness a football match along with many other witnesses. The witness is different from the player. But in the play of God the witness is He and the witnessed is also He. The supreme all-pervading silent aspect of God is the witness and this manifestation of Himself in various forms, putting on various masks for His play, is also He. When you look upon this universe from that angle, then it is you find it as the Lila of God.

GOD'S WILL NEVER ERRS

Q: Since you reached union with God, have you ever felt any doubt about God's will?

Ramdas: No, absolutely not. Ramdas always felt he is made to do the right thing at the right time. Doubt arises if we think we are doing something ourselves at any time. We are not sure then whether we are doing the right thing or not. When we have entirely surrendered ourselves to His will, and are in His hands, our ego is completely absent and we feel sure that we are doing everything according to His will and guidance. There is no cause for regret because we do not do things which will have any reaction on us. Intuition becomes our guide.

Before we have intuition, it is better we are guided by reason which helps us to do the right thing to a great extent. We must think well before we enter upon any action or before we agree to

do any action, whether that action is congenial to others in relation to whom the action is done, or whether it causes any pain or sorrow. If it is congenial and helpful you must act, otherwise you must withdraw from the action. You cannot always depend upon reason because it sometimes misguides you, unless it is illumined reason coming from the enlightened intellect. Some people, before they want to do any action, look to the return it might bring. Even if it be at the expense of somebody else they boldly do it. Here their reason might say that such actions are all right. This is, however, pure selfishness. Right reason will never permit us to undertake such actions as cause injury or loss to others. Reason should guide us to do selfless actions that bring happiness to others, even if we have to undergo loss and suffering on that account. When doubt arises as to whether the action will be really beneficial to others, we must surrender ourselves to God and wait for His guidance. We must commune with Him in silence, when we are sure to get His guidance. Then we cannot err.

GRACE COMES BEFORE FAITH

Q: Does one believe in God by his own will or by the will of God?

Ramdas: That is a question which has arisen in the hearts of millions and millions. Faith first or Grace first? It has been conclusively told by saints who have had the highest spiritual experience that Grace comes first. The devotee says: "Oh God, I remember you because you remembered me first." Without His grace our mind will not turn towards Him. We do not even have faith in the existence of God, unless we are awakened from within. When He awakens our sleeping soul, our mind will turn towards Him. Then we have faith in Him and we pray to Him. Otherwise we shall deny His existence. God must give us faith. That is the only way. That is how Ramdas felt 34 years ago. At that time he had no faith in God. But later on faith came to him because of His grace. Faith was established through experience. As Ramdas went on communing with God, he felt His presence more and more and he was convinced that God existed. Faith must gradually grow and fructify in our absorption in Him. That experience develops into His consciousness and we always feel His presence everywhere. Then we never miss Him. So faith must come through His grace, He must awaken us. We are

sleeping with regard to Him. So He must wake us up and say: "I exist. Wake up and find me!"

Q: What does Ramdas think of Christian missionaries going to India?

Ramdas: That is carrying coals to Newcastle.

NO CHANCE FOR COMMUNISM IN INDIA

Q: There is fear that communism is coming to India.

Ramdas: Ramdas feels that spirituality is so strong in India that communism cannot make headway there. Although there may be here and there some groups making trouble, on the whole people in India are religious minded and they will never allow the communist movement to grow in India.

LOVE IS THE BASIS OF ALL MORALITY

Q: Are there different standards of morality between those who have attained God and those who have not.

Ramdas: The standard of morality must be the same all over the world. Those who have no faith in God, and therefore do not walk on the path of God, have each one a different standard of morality for himself. But those who walk on the God-path have a common standard of morality. The immoral man is he who feels he is separate from God and therefore separate from the rest of humanity. He who identifies himself with God, and so with the whole of humanity, loves all beings and does no harm to anybody. That is the standard of morality obtaining in all religions of the world. It is not merely a law as you find in the Bible, where there are 10 commandments. These commandments will *naturally* be observed if you love one another. Love is the basis, guide and inspirer. Love and God are one. So God is your inner guide. Your standard is God and none else. This is true of all religions. When God speaks through you and God's will prevails in you, you can never do wrong. You are strictly moral in the true sense of the term. Others are making rules and laws, one law for one society. They make social laws and political laws. These are all conventional things. The real law that should guide us is the law of Love. We should never do injustice and never do any selfish action at the expense of others. We will never do so if love is our guide. A man who loves will never tell lies and he will never engage himself in any dishonest activities.

He will be incapable of doing anything out of selfishness, if his love is the real love which is the love of the Self or God, and not of the body.

Jesus has said: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Thyself means the immortal Self who is within you and within all. When we have this knowledge, we will be able to love all alike. This is, indeed, a wonderful saying of Jesus. Krishna has said in the Bhagavad Gita: "See Me in everything and as everybody. Love Me in everybody." It comes to the same thing. Buddha says: "Give love for hate." When people hate you, give them love in return. So all the great Teachers have told us that love is the one thing that should enter into our lives, purify us, enlighten us and fill us through and through with divine peace and joy. Where love is, there joy is. Where love is not, there the heart is dry and there is no peace. So God has been defined as both love and joy.

DID CHRIST VISIT INDIA?

Q: I heard Christ was in India. Do you know anything about it?

Ramdas: These are all speculations. People think that he was in India from his twelfth to twentyeighth year, for which period no records of his life are available. Therefore some believe that during that period he had gone to Tibet, India and some other places in the East. We honour him all the same whether he came to India or not.

Q: When one attains union with God, is his individuality completely wiped out?

Ramdas: His individuality is not entirely lost. The lower individuality is lost and a higher individuality comes into being. Therefore Jesus had said, "I and my Father are one. Still I am the son of my Father." Personality or individuality was maintained by him though he knew he was one with the universal Spirit. He was moving in the world engaging himself in all activities, but it was with a purified and holy individuality, much different from the individuality of the lower nature possessed by people who fight with each other for property and so on. Those with the purified individuality are happy and blissful beings and serve humanity at the sacrifice of everything they have.

Q: Are visions apart from enlightenment?

Ramdas: Yes. Before enlightenment you get visions. Full enlightenment can come to us only after we get certain visions.

Our mind becomes pure and God's light comes into the mind. When the mind is illumined with God's light you will have visions of forms or of light. That shows your mind has become pure. But that is not the whole thing. You must go deep down within you till you become one with God. After that you have light always with you. You are always in the divine presence and have transcended all the names and forms.

VALUE OF STRUGGLE

Q: Is there no positive value in struggle?

Ramdas: Struggle is a sure condition of progress. If you want to progress you must struggle. Otherwise life is stagnant. Stagnation is not a desirable state. Through struggle we develop strength. If you hang a bicycle on a beam and move the pedals you cannot move the bicycle though the wheel might be going round and round. You put it on the floor, sit on it, and if you push the pedal the cycle moves. Why? Because the earth offers resistance. So also struggle to overcome resistance is absolutely necessary for our onward progress.

Q: Would love not illuminate spiritual struggle?

Ramdas: Love is the end of the struggle. When you have got love, your struggle ceases. The struggle is to get rid of the ego which obstructs our getting that love which is our aim. Just as you churn curds only until you get butter, you have to struggle only till you get love.

Q: The river Ganga, after reaching the ocean, keeps flowing to it.

Ramdas: This is the answer Ramdas gave to an Indian sage when he asked about Ramdas' position. He said he was like the Ganges which having reached the ocean still continues flowing towards it. The life of Ramdas has mingled with the waters of immortality, the vast infinite sea of life, and still he is flowing towards it, but knowing that he is one with the ocean of life. That means we become a blessing to humanity. What is the Ganges doing? It feeds millions of acres of crops. So it is that we must be conscious of our unity with God and then live in the world.

Q: How does Ramdas regard the personal Christ and his mission in the world?

Ramdas: He regards Christ in the same way as he regards Krishna or Buddha who came to the world as great saviours. In

fact Christ had abundantly inspired Ramdas during his early struggle. He had lent his help considerably and at one place, when he was in the Himalayas, Jesus had shown himself to Ramdas. Ramdas had a vision of Jesus, as he had of Krishna and Buddha, because Jesus, Krishna and Buddha were his inspirers during his struggle.

Q: Do you consider yourself and your body as one?

Ramdas: The body is the expression of the Spirit, the indwelling Spirit. It is the same with you also. You are the expression of the indwelling all-pervading Spirit. So also everybody.

SICKNESS: A CHANGE IN THE MANIFESTATION

Q: Would that mean the sickness of the body would have to be explained as an expression of the Spirit?

Ramdas: All changes are taking place in the universe as willed by the Divine. Changes are due to the very fact that this manifestation is not permanent. It is ever changing. But the Spirit underlying the universe is eternal and changeless. The question comes naturally, if this is the manifestation why it should be changing. The answer is that this is the changing manifestation. So the body is changing. We call it by so many names such as disease, etc. Just as changes take place in all bodies, there is change in this body also. A house collapses after hundred years or so. So also the body changes and finally perishes.

DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

Q: Do you believe that everything man does is predestined?

Ramdas: God has made out the plan of everything before. That is how we felt in our coming here. In the first instance those persons who are to receive us here and make arrangements here came to the Ashram, got acquainted with us and, after everything was ready, we came here. That shows God had already planned about it though we knew nothing about it. When we landed in Rome, nobody was expected to receive us there. But one lady from Geneva came to receive us. She was Mr. Jean Herbert's wife. Mr. Herbert sent her to Rome to receive us there, as he thought she would be of great use to us as we did not know the language of the place. From there we went to Geneva and

stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Herbert for 15 days. This friend had come to our Ashram in India 15 years ago. Now it is clear that God had planned even 15 years ago to take us to Europe and America. At Paris also the lady with whom we stayed had come to our Ashram some years back. Like that everywhere we met friends who had come to the Ashram. This is all preordained. We never dreamed we would be here. That means we must submit to the will of God and leave Him to do what He thinks best.

Q: Are we preordained to be here now?

Ramdas: Yes, it must be so. Ramdas has come from thousands of miles away to talk to you. Surely it must have been preordained.

WHY GOD CREATES OBSTACLES ON THE PATH

Q: If Ram is in every person and every happening, why is it that He allows people to be led away from the realisation of God?

Ramdas: We talked about Lila a while ago. When God is Himself playing the world game, there is no question of anybody being taken away from God. If we look at the problem from the absolute standpoint, the question does not arise. But looking at it from a lower plane, we can say God has given us an opportunity to accept Him or reject Him. If we consciously accept Him and find Him, we shall enjoy union with Him. It is just like your holding a pen in your hand and writing beautiful poetry. The pen cannot enjoy that poetry although you have written the poetry with it. A conscious being alone can enjoy blissful union with God. God has given us the power of understanding right and wrong, the true and false. We must make use of this understanding and consciously enjoy our union with Him. That is why we have been put into such a situation wherein we are confronted with so many obstacles on the path. Understanding the obstacles and overcoming them will give us strength to reach God, and we shall consciously feel our union with Him and enjoy eternal bliss. So obstacles which are caused by our ignorance are intended to be overcome. In overcoming them there is joy.

When Ramdas was at the Kumbhamela in Haridwar, there was a huge assembly waiting for a dip in the Brahma Kunda—a particularly holy part of the Ganges—at 4 a. m., the most auspicious time. It is believed that those who take bath there at that auspicious moment would get salvation. Some one told

Ramdas to go to the Brahma Kunda and have a dip. There was great rush, as about 12 lakhs of people had gathered together there. You can very well imagine the condition. Many were crushed to death and the next day Ramdas found that hundreds of bodies were carried to the cremation ground. We were caught in that crowd, and we reached the spot. The Sadhu, with whom Ramdas went, suggested that we should take bath and get salvation thereby. But Ramdas told him that he was not for this cheap salvation; that he would work for it, pray and cry to God and get it. Ramdas did not take bath but got salvation, while many did not get it. There is a value in struggle.

RAMDAS' STRUGGLE TO OVERCOME ANGER

Q: Can you tell us some of the practical struggles you have had?

Ramdas: The first thing Ramdas was struggling against was anger. That is the worst enemy of man. There is reason at the back of it. The individual sense is, of course, responsible for it. You may have read in the Bible that we should be free from lust and wrath. Lust is at the bottom of all the mischief. If we free ourselves from lust, then wrath will leave us. When wrath is not there our mind will be perfectly peaceful. Ramdas found anger was trying to get a firm hold on him. So he prayed to God to free him from it. As a sort of discipline, he used to have in the room in which he lived, small placards on which were written "Do not get angry." He used to look at them and would be at once quiet. He was asking God to give him strength to resist anger. Simply writing the words on the placard won't do. You must get strength from God. For about six months he had absolutely no anger even under great provocation. There was enough cause for provocation as people near about him did not agree with him in any way. They remonstrated with him and found fault with everything he did. He however remained perfectly calm and serene. It continued for six months. After six months some talk which was not very palatable made him burst into anger. But he did not speak anything. It came like a small wave and the whole body was burning. He rolled on the ground in terrible pain. After sometime he got up and sat when the devil left him. That was the last attack of anger and it never came again. So God made him triumph over anger. He was repeating at the time "Om Sri

Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram." 'Om' means the supreme Godhead; Sri is the power of God and Ram is the personal God. 'Jai' means victory to Him. *He* must conquer all the forces of darkness in us and purify our heart through and through. Then alone victory is complete within us. When Ramdas was chanting God's name asking Him to be victorious over all forces of darkness within, he was crying day and night to God, and God finally became victorious. That was one thing.

At that time Ramdas was managing a handloom establishment having 40 looms and the same number of workers. In that state of mental exaltation, as he was always living in divine consciousness, he could not carry on that work. He could never find fault with anybody even if they committed the worst mistakes. He did not punish them in any way. So he became perfectly unfit for business. So, naturally, that work dropped off from Ramdas. Everybody was appearing to him as Ram. How could he then punish Ram? He showed love and kindness towards everybody, whatever mistakes they made. In that way his sense of worldly wisdom left him. We must not be worldly wise, but should become like children. Then we will not be able to work in the world for profit and other advantages. If we are to do business successfully, we have sometimes to be harsh and strict with the workers and sometimes may have to punish them. But Ramdas was far away from all these things. People started calling him mad, because he was mad from the worldly point of view. His struggle was terrible.

The transformation which is to take place in us cannot be easily brought about. God was busy with His own handiwork, changing everything about Ramdas. Ramdas knew after a few years that he was reborn. Even his body was dead and gone. Some years after this transformation, an old friend of Ramdas, with whom he was working in his pre-Sannyas days, wanted to talk to him over the telephone when Ramdas was in Calcutta. Ramdas took the telephone and asked who was at the other end. That friend said, "May I speak to Vittal Rao?" — which was Ramdas' name as a householder. Ramdas replied, "Vittal Rao is dead and gone. This is Ramdas speaking here." The friend was shocked to hear this and said, "If Vittal Rao is dead and gone, I have nothing to do with Ramdas." He placed the receiver and left. So the old man is dead and the new one is born.

SECOND SESSION AT THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY, STANFORD,
26th October, 1954.

Questions and Answers

Q: Do you consider your global tour a successful one?

Ramdas: Success or failure is not Ramdas' concern. God has sent him and he is doing God's work everywhere. God alone knows how far he has been successful. He does not mind what people say about it. Some may say it is successful while others may say it is a failure. It is all the same to Ramdas. He is doing the work which God has entrusted him with—to propagate the ideal of universal love and service. He has gone over several countries in Europe and then has come to America. He stayed for a few days in New York, St. Paul, and Seattle before he came here. Wherever he went, he met with nothing but love and kindness. All are our friends when God becomes our friend. So Ramdas meets friends everywhere and he talks to them about God and they are all happy to hear him. He has come to you also to talk about God, because God is his master, friend and all in all, and as such he has no other topic to talk about. In that way, considering the loving attention and kind care he received from friends and the various talks he had given to them about God, the tour may be taken to be very successful.

SCOPE OF RITUALS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

Q: You are primarily against ceremonialism and in your writings you advocate repeating the name of God over and over again. How can you explain that?

Ramdas: Ramdas is not against that ritual or ceremonial which helps you to purify your mind and take you towards God. In his case he found the repetition of God's name was all-sufficient. The main object of all rituals and ceremonies is to help you to keep the mind in communion with God. When the repetition of the name of God alone could do that—and Ramdas found by experience that it could—there was no necessity to follow rituals and ceremonies.

Further it is easy to chant the name of God. It can be done at all times and from all places. For rituals and ceremonies you must have places suitable for carrying on such activities and the

conditions also must be favourable. Those who remember God or are in tune with Him only when performing the ritual or ceremony, are at other times, that is, for most part of the day, likely to forget God. But one, who can keep the name of God always on the tongue, will be in continuous communion with God. Even when you are at work you can chant the name of God and remain in tune with Him. In such work you can never go wrong.

So you see that Ramdas is not entirely against rituals as such, but he feels that rituals should not be merely formal, done without any spirit. If they help you to keep yourself purified within, by all means have resort to rituals and ceremonies. But if they are done simply as a matter of form and have no meaning to you, then it is better not to have them. You can sit silent by yourself, pray to God and keep your mind in tune with Him. That will be of greater help to you, your life will be purified, and your actions will be done in a spirit of spontaneity for the good of others. You will have no cause to regret. Often it happens we act out of momentary impulses and repent afterwards. It is because we have not got a calm and collected mind. Whatever action proceeds from a peaceful mind can be called right action. Such actions come to us only when we meditate upon God and keep ourselves in contact with Him in our daily life. Love should be the key-note of our life. Without love life is dry. It will not be for our good or for the good of others. Love is the enlivener of life.

EDUCATION IS AN AID TO HIGHER LIFE

Q: Is education a positive or negative factor for achieving faith?

Ramdas: It is a positive aid provided we use it for the purpose of prompting our union with or contemplation of God. Ramdas will make himself clear. You get certain experiences in life which gradually lead you to the Divine. Education is a great help because through education it is that you understand things properly, value things in their right perspective and then guide yourself onward on the path towards the supreme goal — union with God. You know that education by itself gives you nothing. It is only a means to an end. It prepares you to lead a higher life. Education, as a great saint has rightly defined, is the revelation of the knowledge which is already within you. That is the right purpose of education. It is not to stuff your mind with so many

facts and figures. You will also find that the greatest works of the world were produced by people who were most illiterate. Their knowledge manifested itself in a most mysterious way when they were in tune with the Spirit. They never had the so-called education.* Education that is granted should be such as to reveal the inherent knowledge within us.

DISAPPEARANCE OF THE 'I'

Q: Why do you refer to yourself as 'he'?

Ramdas: This is a question put to Ramdas at all places, because it is strange when he refers to himself in the third person. It happened about 33 years ago, after he went over the whole of India in quest of God and returned to Mangalore. He sat in meditation in a cave for some time and one morning, when he got up, he could never say 'I'. From that time he referred to himself as 'Ramdas.' It is a strange thing, no doubt, but God knows why he is made to speak like that. Some say God has swallowed up this I-sense, some say the 'I' has become God. Whatever it may be, the 'I' is not there. Ramdas is a child and he looks upon God as master and mother. As master He guides him and as mother, He protects him. In that way, the 'I' has no place in Ramdas' life, and it disappeared in itself. Ramdas did not make any attempt to do so, but somehow God wished that Ramdas should be free from the sense of 'I'. It was not at all a matter of personal decision. He did not make any effort to do away with this I-ness. It was by the will of God that it disappeared. Ramdas is controlled through and through by the divine will. He acts as he is guided by God within. God is all in all for him and there is no idea that he is doing anything by himself.

Q: Did you have to make a conscious effort for that?

Ramdas: Ramdas' mind was so much filled with God-thought that the 'I' automatically disappeared. 'I' is the ego-sense. The ego has no real existence. It is the ego-sense that worries us. It is a sense of separation from God and that must go. When you are filled with the thought of God, who is the all-pervading universal Spirit, necessarily the individual sense disappears.

Q: Did this gift of disappearance of the ego come to you when you were entirely unprepared?

Ramdas: But before that, as you must have read in the books, Ramdas was constantly in the remembrance of God for two years, and that remembrance was perhaps the cause for the dissolution

of this ego-sense. When your mind is always filled with the thought of God, and as God is the all-pervading immortal Truth, the ego-sense, the individual sense, will necessarily disappear. It has no place when the mind is lost in the universal consciousness and cannot keep the I-ness any more. You think you are the body, you are the senses. But when your mind merges in the universal consciousness, you feel you are no longer an individual, you are not the body or the senses, and the ego-sense has no place in your life. You feel every moment you are guided by the universal Spirit. You also find that the whole universe is filled by that Spirit and that everybody is the expression of that Spirit. In that state you have no like or dislike. Your love flows to everybody alike and you do not condemn or hate people. All become your friends. In that vision you enjoy infinite peace and bliss. There is no end to your joy. When you feel ill of another, then it is you are unhappy; because that very thought is based upon the sense of duality, the sense of the ego. When you are always conscious that there is only one universal Spirit pervading everywhere, all sense of distinction disappears. You cannot but love everybody alike. There will be no distinction of good and bad for you. Your heart wells up with joy; there is no anxiety or fear for you.

NEED FOR TEMPORARY RETIREMENT FROM THE WORLD

Q: Why does Indian philosophy stress the ascetic mode of life?

Ramdas: The ascetic ideal is there in order to substitute the ego with the universal vision. For the time being you have to retire from the world, may be for a few months or a few years, so that you can meditate and pass through a course of discipline in order to do away with the ego-sense, till you are established in the higher consciousness. When you have the fullness of spiritual realisation, you go back into the world to spread the love of God. You do not remain a recluse all the time. To do real humanitarian service one should be absolutely free from the ego-sense. Sometimes people enter into such service when their ego-sense has not been eradicated, but the result is they do more harm to the world than good. It is just as you have left your homes and come here for some special education, and will go back after you have gained the necessary education and employ yourselves somewhere. This does not mean you have renounced your homes. It is only

for a temporary period that you are away from home, which is necessary for your education. A man who has no university education cannot hold a high post because he will not have sufficient knowledge or fitness to manage things. So, in order to be fit instruments of God for the service of humanity, man has to retire for some time to prepare himself for the service.

FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE OF KARMA

Q: If you obtain enlightenment, do you rid yourself of Karma?

Ramdas: Karma binds you only when you have the consciousness that you are the doer. When you have lost that consciousness and God alone is working through you, you are free from the bondage of Karma. The hold of Karma is on your ego and when that ego has disappeared, you are no longer bound by Karma.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Q: How do you explain the existence of evil and hatred in the first place?

Ramdas: Good or evil, thinking makes it so. Good or evil is in our mind and not outside us. Ramdas will give you an instance. There is a story in the Mahabharata. Lord Krishna asked Yudhishtira to find out a bad man anywhere in the world. Yudhishtira could not, he being perfectly virtuous. Krishna asked Duryodhana to find a good man. He could not find one because he was himself most vicious. From this it is very clear that when we are good we see all others as good, and when we are bad we see all others as bad. If we have clear vision and a pure heart, we love everybody and never see faults in others. If we go on seeing faults in others, the evil in us will increase and what little good we have will be lost. If we see only good in everybody, the good in us will increase, until at last all the evil in us completely disappears. Heaven and hell are in our own minds. Milton has rightly said, "Mind in its own place makes a hell of heaven and a heaven of hell." When the mind is in tune with God, everything is good for you. You don't see evil anywhere.

Q: Do you ever feel sorry for the suffering of other people?

Ramdas: Ramdas feels for their suffering. But the suffering is due to their ignorance.

Q: Is the ignorance itself not an evil?

Ramdas; We take certain things as happening for our good and we are happy. If we think they are not for our good, we suffer. So it is merely an attitude of the mind.

THE GIVER IS HE AND THE RECEIVER IS HE

Q: What will Ramdas do if I take away his shoes and glasses and throw them out of the window?

Ramdas: You may do so. Ramdas will dance with joy. It is Ram who has given them. If Ram in one form takes them away He will give in another form. Some years ago Ram came one night and took everything away from Ramdas. Ramdas was happy to give Him everything. He had only one loin cloth left. By morning next day all things were provided to him anew by Ram in another form. So the giver is He and the receiver is also He. If you throw away these things, Ram will come in another form and replace them.

GOD HAS NO CASTE

Q: Is it possible for a person of any caste to be one with God?

Ramdas: God has no caste. The castes and creeds are our own making. We have manufactured them, so to say. God never made such distinctions. He assures us that if we have sincere love for Him in our hearts, He becomes ours.

Q: How do you explain that there are more God-realised persons among the Brahmins than among the Sudras?

Ramdas: Because Brahmins are trained up from childhood in devotion to God. They get all the necessary facilities and suitable environments for progress towards God-realisation. Other castes do not have these opportunities and such early training.

CASTE IS NO CRITERION

Q: That was based on Karma then?

Ramdas: Everything is based on Karma in fact. We can undo Karma provided we come in contact with great souls who turn our mind completely towards God and lead us to the goal. There are many saints in India who were born in the so-called lowest castes, among cobblers and potters. So, caste alone is not

the criterion. There are also many Brahmins who have not realised God. They cannot realise God only because they are born as Brahmins.

GOD IS ONE

Q: Do you believe that all worship the same God and that Christians can attain God-consciousness through their own method?

Ramdas: Everybody can, if he follows truly the teachings of the religion in which he is born. Christians can realise God just as the Hindus can. There are no two Gods, one for the Christians and another for the Hindus. There is only one God, our universal father and mother, and we are all His children. Christ, Krishna and Buddha were manifestations of the one impersonal all-pervading Spirit. They were concrete expressions of the Divine. Whoever follows the teachings of Christ must attain salvation and whoever follows Krishna must also reach the same state. So God is one. He is the impersonal all-pervading reality. He often comes down on the earth in different forms as incarnations for the redemption of humanity, in different climes and at different times.

RIGHT USE OF WEALTH

Q: Do we have to abandon all material ideas before reaching union with God?

Ramdas: We can do everything, learn, work, earn, but we must have that goal of God-realisation in view always. All these things must be used in such a way as to lead us towards God. It is not necessary that you should give up all these things or stop acquiring these things in order to progress towards God. You may have everything, but you should not use them in the wrong way. If wealth is used just to maintain oneself and if whatever remains is given away for the service of humanity, then wealth will have been properly used and will be helpful for one's spiritual progress. On the other hand if a person keeps all wealth for himself, uses it solely for his own sake and does not care for the sufferings of others, he is using wealth for wrong purposes and therefore he cannot make any spiritual progress.

Q: So Ramdas will not oppose the President's statement that America will be more prosperous.

Ramdas: America can help all other nations. It has been already doing so. It has given economic aid to many other countries. We must increase our wealth and be prosperous so that we can be useful to those who are in want.

COMMUNION WITH NATURE HELPS^c

Q: Is it easier to realise God through nature than through religious ceremonies?

Ramdas: For some people it is easier when they look upon Nature as the expression of God and tune themselves with Nature. By doing so they go beyond into the realm of the Spirit and feel one with the Spirit. Ramdas also felt like that. When he was in Kashmir, he was sitting on the top of a hill witnessing the beautiful scenery before him. He sat there in rapture feeling one with the whole atmosphere around him and his mind was completely merged in the universal consciousness and he was enjoying ineffable bliss. Therefore it is that we are asked to go into retreat, to seek solitude for sometime, so that we can expand our vision and ultimately merge in the universal Spirit.

GOD'S GUIDANCE

Q: Is there any indecision in your mind about what God wants you to do?

Ramdas: Moment to moment Ramdas gets guidance. He has no idea about what he is going to do. If He makes plans, He breaks them. So Ramdas does not make plans at all. He has no doubt about God's guidance. He has no worry about the future, as to what he is going to do and what he is not going to do. Therefore he is ever happy. If he had been making plans, he would have been worrying. He has no regrets about the past, no worries about the present and no fears about the future.

REINCARNATION

Q: Can you tell us something about reincarnation?

Ramdas: We must have another life because in this life we have not reached spiritual perfection. Then we must have another opportunity in still another life to strive for it and so on until we get spiritual realisation. If no such chance is given to us, we shall be considering God as very unjust for having given us only one

chance to decide our future. He gives us many opportunities to think of Him and to get united with Him. When we have got spiritual realisation, we will have no more rebirth, unless we choose to come by ourselves to serve humanity.

Q: Did God create the world, or do you think the world we live in is the result of evolution?

Ramdas: There must be a starting point for the evolution. That starting point is the creation. Evolution is not hanging on the air. It has a starting point.

Q: Is man more sacred than animals?

Ramdas: Animals have undeveloped consciousness, while man has developed consciousness. The Spirit dwells equally in all, man or animal.

Q: Do you say that animals have also Atman?

Ramdas: Yes. God is pervading everywhere and He says He is seated in the hearts of all. Why should He not be in animals also? If He is not there, what is it that makes animals move and do everything? There is life in them and there is activity in them. It is the universal Power that makes them active and it is the same Power that is within us. All movements of the universe belong to the one power of God. There is one universal Life and one universal Spirit at the back of that Life. We must always do everything in terms of unity. But we are thinking in terms of diversity and are therefore unhappy. By our very actions we create clashes, conflicts and discords, ending in terrible wars. This is all because we think in terms of diversity.

ALL TRUE CULTURES HELP GOD-REALISATION

Q: Is the culture and tradition of India more conducive to God-realisation than of the Western world?

Ramdas: No. Ramdas does not give any importance specially to Indian culture. All cultures, if genuine and true, must enable us to proceed towards the realisation of God. Some people believe that Indian culture is particularly favourable for it. But it depends upon our way of looking at it and the way of our drawing inspiration from that. How is the European culture different in essentials from the Indian culture? You in the West also have been taught from childhood to think of God. All the philosophical works produced by European and American authors show clearly that they are the children of Western culture,

Western culture has produced such great souls. Therefore culture is not at fault.

Q: Through Yoga, have you been able to know your previous incarnation?

Ramdas: God says: "Don't bother about it." It is well that the past is wiped out of our memory.

Q: If the soul does not reach fulfilment in this life, can it live as plant or animal?

Ramdas: No. There is no likelihood. Only in very rare cases man goes down to animal life again. Generally the tendency is to rise higher and higher until we are united with God.

Q: If you were living in a higher life and if you are now in a lower life, can you remember the previous life?

Ramdas: It is not worth while. If you are born in a family of very good parents and they are guiding you all right on the path, and you live a true, sincere and honest life depending upon God, you can definitely say you have been working for this life in your previous birth and now you have got it. That will be a help to us to live a good life now also, so that we shall have a better life in the next birth.

Q: Did you have to give up your family to gain perfection?

Ramdas: Ramdas was taken away from the family for a short period, but he returned to them soon and, thereafter, he *truly* loved them. Before that, his love for them was not genuine. It was personal and selfish. Later on, when he came back, his family lived with him and his love towards them was true and genuine.

HINDUS ACCEPT CHRIST AS AN INCARNATION

Q: Do you regard Christ as a prophet in the Hindu religion also?

Ramdas: Hindus consider him as one of the incarnations in the same level as Krishna, Rama and others.

Q: Christ is supposed to have said that, to be a true lover of Christ, you must give up all family and home.

Ramdas: At heart, you must be like that. In the Bhagavad Gita there is a verse: सर्व धर्मेभ्यस्त्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज। meaning, "Abandoning all paths come to Me alone for shelter." Our hearts must be given over to Him; and all our actions must be dedicated to Him. That is what Christ must have meant.

GOOD AND BAD DEFINED

Q: How can we decide between good and bad in the world?

Ramdas: We can provisionally define them; that mode of life and action which takes us towards God is good and that which takes us away from God is bad. We can decide this ourselves. This is true only when you are living in the dual plane. When you live in God you go beyond good and bad. You will be incapable of doing anything prompted by the ego-sense or low desires. You will be pure at heart and will be as innocent as a child. You will be a blissful, holy and pure child of God. You will not be doing good to others. Your actions will be spontaneous. You will be like the flower that gives perfume by its very nature. If you ask the flower why it gives fragrance, it will only say that to do so is its nature. Your life will be so fragrant and you will automatically spread joy and peace.

GOD DOES NOT PUNISH

Q: Does God punish?

Ramdas: God never punishes. Punishment is always self-inflicted. We commit wrongs when we forget God and we have to suffer for them. When we remember Him, we act wisely and do not have to suffer. So we are punished by our wrong actions.

Q: Is it possible to be good and yet not to love God?

Ramdas: Ramdas thinks that by loving God alone you can be really good.

EGOISM THE GREATEST OBSTACLE

Q: What is the greatest hindrance to the development of a spiritual life?

Ramdas: It is the egoistic feeling, "I am separate from another." It is born of ignorance. We do not know who we are. If we know, the obstacle is not there. We think we are merely bodies made up of five elements, senses, mind and so on, but we do not know that there is the immortal Self within us. The moment we know that, we realise that ignorance has been the cause of our suffering and misery. For, the obstacle is ignorance, and out of ignorance ego-sense is born.

Q: You had visions. Did you have them because you were in communion with God ?

Ramdas: God is the giver of everything. Visions were also given by Him. Unless He gives, we cannot have anything. We think we have everything ourselves and we forget He is the giver. He is called Providence because He provides everything.

SPEECH AT THE CHURCH FOR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALL PEOPLE,
SANFRANCISCO,

26th October, 1954,

INDIA'S MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

Dear Friends,—You must bear with Ramdas when he refers to himself in the third person. It was many years ago that he somehow had to drop this I-ness and refer to himself as 'Ramdas' in the third person. This happened in 1923. After that year he could not say 'I' because, just previous to it, for about two years God made him remember Him continuously and practise day and night the repetition of His name. Ramdas was praying to Him to see that he was made a child of His, and so when God made him the child, the I-ness left him and from that time he is referring to himself as 'Ramdas.'

Now Ramdas has only one subject to talk to you about and that is God, because God is his main support and main refuge. He feels God's presence at all times with him and he cannot but talk, think and do everything in the name of God. God has become all in all to him. He has discovered that God is love and He is seated in the heart of everyone of us without any distinction. God is the all-pervading and universal truth. We are all His children. As such, the distinctions that we have made among ourselves are not only invidious but are also utterly false. In the light of God we are all one, whether we belong to the east, west, north or south. We are all members of the human race and are the children alike of the same divine parent, God, and such a God is residing in the heart of every one of us. We can dissolve the differences which we have built up, by going within ourselves and finding God there. In the light and knowledge and experience of God within us, we can love one another on the basis of perfect equality, and thereafter the outer distinctions bear no meaning for us. We see everywhere the Divine.

Ramdas left India as willed by God with the idea of spreading the ideal of universal love and service. Universal love and service is possible only when we have attained universal vision, that is, when we behold everyone as the revealment and expression of God. This is the message which India offers to the world. Of course, in all religions you will find that the great Teachers and the great spiritual Masters have emphasised the need of drawing

our vision inward to behold the Divine within us. But India goes a step further to say that we are all embodiments of the Divine. Because we do not know about it, we see differences outside and are obsessed by them, with the result that we quarrel with each other and enter into strife and war. This is all because we have not recognised the existence of the Divine within us, and have not realised that the whole universe we see before us is the presentation or manifestation of the one indwelling Truth.

If we find God within us, what are the changes that come in our external life? We become gentle, 'good, kind and loving towards all beings on earth. We shall not see the external differences which are only man-made and not God-made. We love each other, live in harmony with each other without minding the external differences based upon caste, creed, race or nationality. This is the message that we should now understand and put into practice. In a world rent with strife and with people not trusting each other, and thereby creating an atmosphere fit only for war and discord, what we have to do is to purify ourselves by drawing our mind within to go deep down and shed all differences and diversities, realising the spiritual unity of mankind, and thereby live in harmony and peace.

This is the humble message which Ramdas has come to deliver to you all from India. He gave this message in many places in Europe which he visited, viz., Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Holland and England. After visiting a few places in the United States, he is in your midst. He is very happy to meet you all because you have assembled here in a spirit of brotherhood, forgetting all external differences. We are all, in truth, one in God. This oneness in God is the thing to be realised before we can be really happy and make others happy. We can really love others only if we know our oneness with them. It is love that makes us look upon everybody as our own. It will produce harmony and peace in our heart, and those who come in the orbit of this love also get joy and peace.

Man's happiness, we all know, lies in the realisation of this truth. We think, by dividing among ourselves for wealth, power and glory, we are making ourselves happy. This is a mistake. If we love each other in the true sense of the term, which is spiritual unity, then it is we come by real happiness. We can never attain happiness by accumulating or possessing things of the world. The fulfilment of worldly ambitions will not only not give us this joy but will drag us away from it. The more and more we give

ourselves away in the love for others, the greater is our happiness. This secret we do not know.

o *Questions and Answers.*

HOW RAMDAS' EGO WAS KILLED

Q: What was the nature of that experience which you had in 1923 in which your 'I' ceased to exist.

Ramdas: When we sit for prayer we find our mind is wandering. The ego-sense is too strong in us. So God must take hold of us and make us do the necessary discipline, prayer, etc., so that the ego-sense may disappear and we can realise our union with Him. Ramdas felt at the very start that God had taken him up, and that God Himself was the motive power in him which made him do everything. So it was by His grace that this ego-sense disappeared and from that time Ramdas felt that he became the child of God. In fact, God made him His child, simple, pure and innocent. Ramdas never thought that he was doing anything by himself. Even to this day he feels exactly like that and he has absolute inner freedom and peace. God seems to have enveloped him, permeated him through and through. In this he experiences bliss which is simply indescribable, and he is bathing in divine peace and joy. He now sees only the Divine everywhere and has no enemy in the world. He loves even those who dislike him. Those who at first disliked him, later came to love him.

So the best way to destroy hate is to give love. This is the great teaching of Buddha. Jesus also said that we should love our neighbours as ourselves, and forgive our enemy not seven times but seventyseven times. For this you must fill yourself with divine love to such an extent that you can return love for any wrong done to you. When God has filled you through and through, in every part of your being, the mind, senses, body and soul are all imbued with the love of God.

We must allow God to do what He likes with us. But we want God to do as we like. This is the mistake. Surrender to God does not mean imposing conditions on Him. It is only handing ourselves to Him thoroughly so that His light, grace, power and joy may flow into us freely without any obstacle or hindrance and take possession of us completely. Without Grace nothing can happen. People think by their own effort they can get God.

When you know you are helpless, then God comes to your help. You feel this after you have made strenuous efforts to get Him.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD "GOD" •

Q: In meditation, what does the word "God" signify? Is He eternal truth, reality and peace?

Ramdas: What Ramdas was doing in those days was, as willed by God, repeating God's name constantly. This was his mainstay. He used to commune with God through the chanting of the Divine name. You may take any name of God—Jesus, Krishna, Allah, Buddha, or any other name which stands for God.

God is actually beyond name. He is the universal Spirit. You can call Him by any name you like and that name should stand for Him, signify Him. If you repeat the Name in that spirit, you will find the heart elevated, purified, enlightened and filled with divine peace and joy. The Name alone can do the whole thing. He who is the votary of the Name is really saved. Therefore Jesus and all the great Teachers of the world say: "Do everything in My name and for My sake. Then you will attain true peace and bliss."

This brings you union with God. When you are united with God there is no end to your peace and joy, and your heart will be flooded with bliss which will go to all alike.

Our mind is always restless and we are harbouring many thoughts which we ought not to harbour. Human life is intended to be dedicated to His service, to constant remembrance and realisation of Him. That is the main object with which God has given this human life to us. If we are to simply enjoy the pleasures of the senses, we live only like animals and there cannot be any difference between us and the animals. We are beings gifted with the understanding to discriminate right from wrong, to reject wrong and accept the right. We reject falsehood and accept truth by using our understanding power. We do not use that power and the result is that we are carried away by impulses, and if we act as prompted by the impulses we shall be no better than animals.

In the Hindu scriptures there is a prayer, the meaning of which is: "Oh God, lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light and from death to Immortality." We are now caught up in darkness, unreality and death. If we know we are the immortal, changeless Spirit, we shall not be afraid of death.

Death is to the body and not to the Spirit within us. If we realise this we shall be absolutely fearless. Fearlessness itself will give us so much peace, joy and courage. But we are every moment afraid of some calamity happening. There is a fever of fear passing through the entire humanity. Although we say we have trust in God, we haven't got the real faith. If we depend upon God, there will be no strife or catastrophe of any kind in the world. In our individual life there are so many mishaps coming to us. All these relate to the physical side of life which is impermanent and changing. It does not affect the Spirit within us which is immortal.

If we attain the Spirit, or if we realise that we are the Spirit, we shall remain perfectly peaceful in all conditions. A man who is always afraid of the future is dying every moment. We must be bold and fearless. That will give us joy because we have the assurance that we are not going to die. We are ever one with God, the universal Spirit who is birthless and deathless. We are the children of God. How can the children of God die? God is the eternal father and He can never give birth to mortal children. We are looking forward to our earthly father and mother to help us. But they pass away and we take it that we are also to pass away. We think so because we identify ourselves with the body. All the things that we have, including the body, are transitory and we do not take anything with us when we depart this life. We know this but still cling on to these perishable things, forgetting Him, the supreme master, father and mother.

HOW TO PRAY

Q: How does one pray?

Ramdas: The prayer should be a simple one, in one's own language as everyone can do. We need not borrow other's language for our prayer. We can pray to God to give us constant communion with Him so as to ultimately realise His presence in us and everywhere about us. This is a simple prayer.

Some years ago Ramdas came across a prayer which was, indeed, a wonderful one. It was in the form of a poem written by an unknown author who says: "Oh God, do not grant my prayer." The author was right because we do not know what is good for us. God alone knows. We must leave things to Him and then He will do what is best for us. If we foolishly ask for things which may not be for our good, we will have to suffer. So,

that devotee prayed to God not to grant his prayers.

That seems to be the best prayer. We have to leave all things to Him. We do not do so, though God is our father and mother and knows what is good for us. If we entirely depend upon Him and leave everything to Him, how beautiful our life will become! He will purify us through and through and make us aware of His existence in us and fill our hearts with true love which will flow spontaneously to everybody equally. We will produce happiness all round.

RAMDAS' PRESENT STATE

Q: What is the type of your meditation and prayer at present?

Ramdas: Nowadays there is no meditation for Ramdas. He lives, moves and has his being in God. There was a time when he was meditating, taking God's name constantly. Now he does not do anything of the kind, but he feels God's presence with him at all times. It has become a natural state with him.

Meditation is to rise above the unnatural state in which we are and to get ourselves established in a higher consciousness where we can be aware of God's presence. When you are established in that state you feel God is ever with you and you do not lose contact with Him. You have no more practice left to be done. To talk to anybody in that state is to talk to God; to see anybody is to see God; to love anybody is to love God. Because He alone exists.

RAMDAS' SPIRITUAL SADHANA

Q: What was your spiritual practice?

Ramdas: Repetition of God's name and bringing into the mind the glories and attributes of God, making it completely free from all desires and gradually sinking down and losing oneself in the divine consciousness. This is the purpose of all spiritual discipline. Ramdas was sitting in a particular posture with eyes closed repeating God's name mentally. By that way the mind used to get filled with divine radiance, peace and joy and, gradually, the body consciousness was lost. He sat for hours together in a state of complete absorption in the Divine.

This was going on in the early days of his spiritual struggle. But sometimes he used to lose the contact with God which made

him as restless as a child that missed its mother. That state, by His grace, has now passed. Now, for all the 24 hours of the day, he feels the divine presence within. He is supremely happy and has absolutely no reason to be unhappy. God's grace has come to him and changed him completely inwardly and outwardly and made him His child.

Ramdas used to go to solitude, seek the company of holy men and repeat God's name constantly so that the mind could be made free from all external thoughts and distractions. The mind is distracted when it desires for the things of the world. The desires can leave you only when your mind is filled with God. A man who has realised God is perfectly desireless, because desire for worldly things is substituted by the desire for God and when you realise God, that desire is also destroyed. It is just like using a thorn to remove a thorn from your foot, and when that thorn is removed, both the thorns are thrown away. One desire is removed by another desire and, finally, both the desires are thrown away.

When you feel the divine presence continuously with you and your eyes are dazzling with divine radiance, you see only the Divine everywhere. You are like a pure and innocent child. That is why Jesus had said: "Unless you become like children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." To become like children, we must allow God to mould us. He is ready waiting for us at the corner, but we avoid Him. We go the other way. He is after us, but we do not want Him and try to escape Him. He is so good, gracious and loving that the love of the earthly mother is nothing before it. Ramdas speaks of God so intimately because God has accepted him as His child and has made him feel His presence at all times. Therefore he has been given the authority to speak about Him like this.

HOW OBSTACLES BECOME HELPS

Q: Does Ramdas recognise any worldly circumstances that would distract and prevent perfect communion with God?

Ramdas: In the early stage one will be disturbed by external conditions, but gradually, as one goes on remembering God constantly, one will be unmindful of the external conditions, however unfavourable and distracting they may be. In fact, difficulties become opportunities and obstacles become helps. That is how Ramdas felt in his days of struggle, because at that time he was

beginning to realise that God was doing everything for his good. It all depends upon how we look at things. If we take the circumstances as for our good, we remain happy. If we take it the other way, then we suffer. In the former case the external conditions help us in our spiritual evolution, while in the latter case they stand in our way. When we surrender ourselves to God, we must calmly bear everything and remain cheerful, because everything that happens is ordained by God, who is all love and forgiveness.

In the beginning we feel disturbed no doubt, but when we have surrendered to Him and take everything that happens as for our good, we do not suffer at all. After all, good and evil are only attitudes of our mind. If we deeply reflect over the experiences we have gained so far in our life and evaluate rightly all the situations in which we were placed, we come to the conclusion that good and bad were only our mental conceptions.

This is true of all external circumstances. No external condition can give us continuous joy. The same thing which pleases you at one time displeases you next time. The object has not changed, but only your attitude towards it has changed. Good and evil are within you, pleasure and pain are within you and do not depend on external circumstances. If you take external circumstances as coming to you from your Divine father and mother, there will not be any waves rising in your mind and in that balanced mind God's light will be reflected. Therefore let us surrender to the divine will in all situations and we will be free from all worries.

IF RAMDAS' LIFE IS THREATENED

Q: If a man rises up and threatens Ramdas' life, what course of action will Ramdas take?

Ramdas: Ramdas will never lift his finger to take anybody's life, even if he is attacked. So many have attempted, though not actually to kill him, to beat him. But they could not do anything. As soon as they came near and saw Ramdas' smiling face, they at once lowered their hands and went away.

THE WAY TO REMOVE SUFFERINGS

Q: How does Ramdas enter into or react to the sufferings of his brethren?

Ramdas: Ramdas is not so heartless as not to feel for the sufferings of others. The sufferings touch him very deeply and he wishes everybody to be happy. He knows the cause of their suffering. It is ignorance and lack of faith in God. So Ramdas goes about telling everybody that if anybody wants to be free from suffering he should realise God, because physical and mental sufferings do not affect him when he communes with God. We are beset with many worries and we become miserable. All such worries will disappear the moment we surrender ourselves to God. We have regrets about the past, worries about the present and fears about the future. If we leave things to God the mind becomes perfectly calm and serene and we enjoy happiness and peace. Physical sufferings do come, but God in his mercy will relieve us from these also. A man who is starving and who depends upon God will be somehow provided with food by Him. This is true. So Ramdas is going about telling everybody that there is no reason to be unhappy. God has stretched forth his helping hand and we have only to catch it. Then we shall be lifted up from the despondency and fear. That is sure.

WHY DO GOD'S CHILDREN SUFFER

Q: Many people in this country have difficulty in reconciling the idea of an all-merciful God with the mental and physical suffering of so many of the children of God. We understand to some extent that much of the suffering is due to our wrong-doing and ignorance. However, we have great difficulty in understanding why God's children should suffer and why they are not given an opportunity to experience God.

Ramdas: To know the answer to this question, you must go back to some previous life. But people here do not believe in a previous life, nor a future life. As we sow, so shall we reap. This is true of all persons in the world. The child suffers as a result of something done in the past life. That is the way we can explain it. Otherwise, there is no reason for a child to suffer when there is an all-loving and all-merciful father and mother. So we understand that, if we do evil, we must suffer. We may escape punishment for some time, but the punishment pursues us. This is based on the principle of cause and effect. This is the law governing nature. There is no effect without a cause. So the suffering of a child which knows not the difference between good and evil and which is too young to have any faith in God, shows

that suffering has come to it as a result of some previous cause, some action done in a previous life.

THE LAW OF KARMA

Q: I understand that there is, among the young children in India, more physical suffering than among the young children in our country. I find it difficult to believe there was so much more wrong-doing by those children of India in their previous life than by those in this country.

Ramdas: But it is quite possible. Otherwise, their suffering cannot be explained. God does not inflict any suffering on us. Suffering comes to us due to our own actions. If we do not hold this view, we have to deny God altogether. The Hindus, after deep study, have come to the conclusion that sufferings, whatever their nature may be, come to us only as a result of some cause for which we ourselves are responsible. This holds good everywhere. India must therefore be deemed to have done so much wrong in the past for which there is suffering now.

Some years ago there was a great earthquake and severe floods by which many people suffered badly. When Mahatma Gandhi was asked, he said people must have committed many sins for which they suffered such calamities. You know there was the system of untouchability prevalent in India, which has now been mostly wiped out by the efforts of Gandhiji. If a Brahmin walking on the road happened to meet a Pariah (the so-called untouchable) at some distance on the road, he would shout out to the Pariah to keep away from him. The Brahmin's idea was that he would be polluted if the Pariah came near him. People used to persecute the lower castes to such an extent. So Gandhiji said people suffered as a result of treating the lower castes in this manner. Any wrong done, whether by Indians or Europeans, by black people or white people, brought suffering in its train. The same law holds good in all cases, and the wrong-doers, whoever they be, have to suffer. It is a universal law. That is why it is said we should not do any wrong. We may seem to be victorious for the moment by our wrong-doings, but the day of judgment must come to everyone of us and we shall have to suffer for what we have done. It is not God who punishes us, but our own actions bring their reactions.

NO ESCAPISM BUT SELFLESS SERVICE

Q: When one seeks the Divine, is he really trying to escape the human problem, or establish a fellowship with God?

Ramdas: To seek fellowship with God is not a selfish aim. It is not an escape from the troubles of the world, but for self-purification it is essential, so that by uniting yourself with God you can be of better service to the world. Ramdas felt that when he was in the world, he was not doing enough for the good of the world. After God claimed him as His child, He infused into Ramdas His power and light. Then he became more useful to the world. Before that, he was serving the world with a selfish motive, but now his work is purely selfless. Whereas in those days he received more than he gave, now he gives away whatever he receives. He never keeps anything for himself. So God's worship purifies our actions and makes us instruments in His hands for the service of the suffering in the world. Fellowship with God gives you joy and peace which flows out in terms of love in the form of service, without expecting any return for the service rendered. You do not care for name or fame, or anything else in the world.

SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL WEALTH MUST GO TOGETHER

Q: Does Ramdas mean that his own country can be helped if each man is offering himself to his capacity?

Ramdas: It is quite possible, and India is aiming at the establishment of such a society. It is not merely that it should be materially rich. It should be spiritually rich also. They must go together, side by side. India is spiritually rich and materially poor. So what India needs is material riches, but not at the expense of spiritual riches. Here, in the Western countries, we find there is more of wealth and less of spiritual life. If they raise themselves spiritually also to the same status as in the material side, there will be all-round happiness. Unless you are spiritually rich, you cannot share that joy with others. So fill yourself with spiritual wealth also. India is trying now to rise in material wealth and when it comes by that, it will possess material wealth side by side with the spiritual wealth which it already has. India will then be a blessing to humanity.

Thus every country must prove to be a blessing to humanity. When we mention the countries separately, we do not do so in

terms of any difference. We are all one in humanity. Ramdas has been moving all the world over and he never felt he was going to any foreign country. When he sits with you he feels one with you, as if he is sitting with Indians, because the same Spirit is dwelling in the hearts of you all. Why should he then make any difference and how can he have a different vision?

INDIA AND GANDHIJI'S NON-VIOLENCE

Q: We understood that Mahatma Gandhi did not believe in capital punishment even for criminals who committed murder? How was it that the Government of India failed to recognise the wishes and spirit of Mahatma Gandhi when he was assassinated and his assassin was executed?

Ramdas: That was a sorry tale, indeed. Even during the lifetime of Mahatma Gandhi, he condemned the method employed by the Government of India in putting down rioting and other ways of violence. But they did not heed his words. He was feeling that we had not gained independence at all. What he meant by Swaraj was spiritual independence so that people may be free from all violent thoughts and actions. He found that we had got only the husk and not the kernel of it. Even in those days when he was alive, people were being hanged for murder cases and nobody listened to his words. India ought to have followed his advice. It was through his non-violent policy that the British Government left India in a friendly manner. You will not find any parallel to this incident anywhere in the world.

Q: If there is one power, and that is all-powerful, where do the evil forces come from?

Ramdas: There is a lower power and also a higher power. The lower power makes our life and actions condemnable. The evil power is destructive in its tendencies and under its influence we forget God and act in so many wrong ways. This is the power of ignorance, as they call it. If that power of ignorance was not there, we would have been so very happy. We try to rise above that lower power and establish ourselves in the higher.

Q: Duality of life is also in the power of life?

Ramdas: The power that rises out of duality is evil. It is destructive and is responsible for all the discord and conflict in the world. It has not unity in its aim and purpose. The divine power ultimately conquers this. The divine power is elevating while the other is degrading. We must submit ourselves to the

divine power in order to free ourselves from the clutches of the diabolical power. That means surrender or resignation to the will of God. If we have already done that, there is no meaning in our striving to have it. But we feel we are caught in the meshes of the lower nature, in which we are doing so many things which are degenerating and consequently we are made unhappy.

Q: If God created everything, how could He create destructive power also?

Ramdas: It is a mysterious thing. It may be because we have to overcome that power and go to Him.

Q: Are all these powers not coming from the same source? And are these powers not misdirected?

Ramdas: When the water that flows from a pure spring passes through dirty gullies, it comes out dirty. But if the channel is kept perfectly clean, then the same water flows on to the other side as pure as it started. In the same manner, when the power flows through impure instruments, it makes it do so many bad things. When it flows through pure enlightened instruments, it makes it do only the right thing. In any case it is the same power. It is used by us according to the nature which is ours at the time when it flows through us. Why this lower nature is there, is a mystery which our intellect cannot find out. Our reasoning power cannot explain it because God, who governs the world, is infinite and eternal and His ways are inscrutable. We cannot know why things are happening in a particular way and why certain things exist.

GOD IS PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL

Q: Is it necessary to personalise God?

Ramdas: God is personal and impersonal. As a personal God we draw inspiration from Him for our day-to-day right actions and to be guided by Him from moment to moment. We can realise His personal form easier than the impersonal. We cannot have any direct relationship with the impersonal; nor can we pray to the formless. Only to the personal God we can pray, appeal and pour out our thoughts. When we surrender, we offer ourselves to a personal God who is also impersonal. The universal Spirit has become personal out of mercy, so that we can depend upon Him, pray to Him, take Him as our sole refuge and support and thereby be lifted up from the lower nature wherein we are caught,

TRANSCEND ALL DUALITIES

Q: How does Ramdas feel with the paradox, "That which is good also might be not good" and also, "The things we want, we give away."

Ramdas: Paradox implies dualities. A paradox loses its place and meaning in the higher non-dual Reality. The personal and the impersonal are two different aspects of one and the same transcendent Divine. In the Bhagavad Gita there is a verse which asks us to transcend the dualities like honour and dishonour, pleasure and pain, praise and blame, success and failure. All these must be the same to us. How can they be the same to us? It is, indeed, very difficult to understand. But, actually, Ramdas can say from his own experience that he feels they are the same to him. So long as the individual sense is there, they are all very real to us and are conflicting. But when the individuality disappears, they are the same to us. Loss and gain make no difference as it will be like taking out something from one pocket of your coat and putting it in another pocket of yours. What you take out is loss to that pocket and what you put in is gain to the other pocket. But you are not affected by it as both the pockets are yours. In the same way, in all cases, the giver is He, and the receiver is also He. In all you see only the one Spirit manifest. All are He.

NO CHOICE IN SURRENDER

Q: What is the difference between the grace of God and man's choice?

Ramdas: In the early stages, when you are striving to reach God, you do not know what is good and what is bad. Then you must pray to God and wait for His guidance. When we are faced with a problem and have to choose between two things, we do not know how to decide in the matter. If we surrender ourselves to God and feel that He is guiding us in all matters, we do not have to make any choice at all. He chooses everything for us and makes us do as He chooses. Then we never go wrong. What we have to do is only to submit to His will.

Q: Is there any case when we make a choice?

Ramdas: Choice is there when we have not surrendered ourselves to Him. The reason works in that case. But reason is not an infallible guide. God alone is infallible. He can always

guide us on the right path. His guidance is reflected in the working of intuition and when we are guided by intuition, we cannot go wrong.

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantihi!

